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THE BOOK OF MY YOUTH

HERMANN SUDERMANN

The Book of My Youth

Translated by
WYNDHAM HARDING

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON . . . . MCMXXIII

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THE BOOK OF MY YOUTH

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THE BOOK OF MY YOUTH

CHAPTER I

BETWEEN THE FORESTS

IMAGINE a farmhouse and the buildings belonging to it, embedded in greenery, as though it had some secret treasure to conceal—a farmhouse looking out on to a forest and guarded by another forest in its rear.

It was not in the farmhouse itself—the stars which regulated my destiny were not so auspicious—but in one of the buildings, that I first saw the light. On the left of the gateway stood the brewery, a simple stone building—not the modern, palatial factory with high malting towers and fantastic copper apparatus under a vaulted roof of iron girders—but just a plain, unpretentious structure, which gave no outward sign of its trade, unless it were the highly scented clouds of steam which, on most days, made their way into the air through its wooden shutters.

Two dwelling rooms had been built on to the brewery, and in the back room I was born and drowsed over my first dreams.

In front of the door there were three birches, or it may be four or five. I can safely exaggerate the number, as there is no one to contradict me, unless it be my mother, for the trees have long since gone. And my mother is ninety-seven and has probably forgotten how many trees there were.

Some seats had been cut in the grassy bank between these trees, but why I do not know, as no one ever

sat on them, and in front of them there were some wooden tables and benches, wrought by my mother's own hands, for any stray excursionists who might need liquid refreshment and rest. It is true that none ever came, but they *might* have come, and also we had no license to sell beer, but, as my mother said, "One must always hope," and she still says so in spite of the French promenading up and down in front of her windows in the Memel area.

The space between these two mossy seats was my first kingdom. Its boundary in front was the highway on to which I was not allowed to trespass at any price, because of the wicked country carts, under the wheels of which a small boy might be crushed before he knew it. The boundary on the left was a sunken brook, which was of course equally dangerous, especially as it was hidden treacherously at some points by a thicket of raspberries run wild.

The other side of the brook the farmer's garden began, the earliest longing and first marvel of my existence, for there was no imaginable treasure on earth which was not to be found therein. Apples hung there, and not only apples, but apple cakes grew there wild, and the flowers—how much finer than those which one brought back when mother took me on a visit to some neighbor and which then shone in splendor for months after in the blue vase on the table by the sofa. There were also the honeysuckle arbor and the sundial which I described in *Frau Sorge*, and there was also a flight of steps leading to a balcony, from the giddy heights of which one could look down, as God looks down through the red sky of evening.

Once the wicket gate had closed behind us on our way home, the garden remained for a long time a vanished land, the territories of which my feet might

not tread and which remained accessible only to the secret wanderings of my dreams. The garden lost its foliage, was covered with snow; the snow vanished and the garden renewed its greenery; but it always remained the same enchanted land.

Meanwhile, I began to conquer the rest of the world. These conquests were at first confined to the endless stretch of country which ran from the gateway to the edge of the forest. Here there were discoveries to be made and great experiences to be lived, in a plenty which knew no diminishment. There were toadstools as high as houses and with flaming red roofs, "king's candles," and hemlock bushes which reached the sky, and two ant heaps as big as the ice cellar which lay in the darkness of the wood and which I was only allowed to visit when my father held me firmly by the hand.

This hand which grasped mine—gnarled, and hard as iron with work—this omnipotent guide, before which the world bowed, before which things nearer at hand vanished and the horizon revealed itself, that is my earliest memory of my father.

At first it used to come down from quite high up, and if I was to hold it tightly I had to lift my arm quite a great deal, but by degrees it sank lower, my arm did not hurt so much, and I could step out without the sensation of being pulled and dragged along.

To this hand there was attached a man who was enormously tall and already exceedingly ancient, and this man possessed a razor, a blue apron, and a thermometer. I was permitted to bring him the blue apron when he was going to his work, but it was forbidden to touch the thermometer, because I might let it drop and, if it fell and broke in pieces, then it could not be used any more and we should all have to starve. The razor—that was so sharp that one

could wound oneself to death with it and so it was usually locked up.

My father was probably even then the quiet man whom I remember as quiet all through my youth, for he came of a quiet stock in whose hearts and houses laughter was not encouraged, but the divine portion of happiness which is given to every human being cannot be kept still, especially when joy itself calls the tune, and so I think laughter must often have pealed in my home during those years and my parents' voices lulled me and my brothers to sleep with many a song during the evenings.

Two brothers came after me at intervals of eighteen months, and then, seven years after I was born, a third. All three were doomed to suffer, and two of them to die young.

But in the dim twilight of those years I remember nothing of them. On the contrary, it seems to me, even in thinking of later years, as if I had always been alone.

The only memory I have is that my second brother suffered from cramp and that mother often went down on her knees and prayed while the little body lay blue and stiff on the floor before her. And I remember loving him very much one day, because he had been given a brightly colored check dress which I fear bears witness to an innate tendency in my character to pay too much attention to externals.

My mother was a busy little woman, occupied from early morning till late at night in caring for her loved ones and in keeping her house spotless. She washed and mended, polished and carpentered, cleaned and ironed continually. The little lamp by her bedside often burned until daybreak, and if my father had to get up during the night to run off the mash or attend to the fermentation, it was she who waked him.

My earliest memory of her is of lying in the evening twilight in my cot and her bending over me, singing, and suddenly there came a wave of terror over me, a wild breathless terror, that the day might come when she might no longer be there and I should have to go out into the wide world alone, that wide world beyond the forest, unprotected, uncomforted, and at the mercy of wicked people.

Well, *this* fear at least has proved baseless, for I am sixty-four years old and she is still with me.

But the world beyond the forest was always full of dangers for me until I drove through it for the last time. One could manage the wood itself, in spite of the giants, ghosts, and mad dogs who lived and ran about always between the tree trunks. One killed the giants, the ghosts did one no harm and one kept carefully out of the way of the mad dogs, which, as everybody knows, can only run in a straight line. But it was what came afterward which was so terrifying.

There was the great main road which led to the frontier, along which gypsies and Jews prowled, looking for a chance to stop small boys who were sent into Werden to buy coffee or sugar and rob them, or even drag them off to Russia, that wild country in which a person would be hopelessly lost. Or there were drunken Lithuanians, who laughed at you from carts and threatened you with having your gizzard cut out, and what that was you did not know, but it must be something very terrible, for they pulled out their knives. Or there were old beggar women who sat in the ditch and offered you their brandy bottles and there was many another terror in the great world.

Sometimes you had luck and some kindly man came along the road and asked, "Whose youngster are you?" and when the answer was given, "I am

Sudermann's Hermann from Matzicken"; then he became even more friendly and might even take you by the hand until you reached the grocer's shop at Werden—holy ground, for Kant's parents lived there once—or if it was on your way home, as far as the point where the forest on the left opened its dark door, to the relief of the terror-stricken boy.

I began lessons at five. The first reading book presented few difficulties and we soon reached the little passages which followed the complete sentences. But writing was not quite so easy and the slate squeaked under the hardly driven pencil.

But my mother encouraged me: "Work hard, my little lad, and when you can read and write well you shall have the *Children's Friend* for a birthday present."

This *Children's Friend* must, I thought, be something splendid, for otherwise my mother would never have referred to it so often. It must be the embodiment of all worldly joy and all worldly wisdom, since such hard struggles were required to gain it.

Again and again I asked the question, "Mother, have I got so far?" but, no, I had not got so far and it might happen, I learned, that even my sixth birthday might not bring it to me. This threat cost me many a secret tear.

Then one evening, in the middle of September, my mother came back under the hazy, red-lit sky, from the market at Heydekrug and laid a book before me with a meaning smile. It seemed to me to be but little thinner than the Bible and it was apparently intended for me.

I looked up at her with a beating heart.

She kissed me and said, "There it is."

I did not sleep much that night and as morning

seemed as if it would never come, I ventured to get up softly, take down the candlestick from the table, and put the tallow candle—mother made them herself, and a respectable stearine candle seldom found its way into our house—on the top of the chair on which lay my clothes.

Never did schoolgirl read a forbidden novel with greater excitement. Even the first story was of absorbing interest, and apparently written especially for me. It dealt with a good little boy called Karl, who was six years old and who every evening carefully folded up his little jacket and trousers and crowned this masterpiece of orderliness by laying his stockings crosswise on the top of them.

Shyly I regarded the untidy bundle of clothes at my side, in which there were no stockings at all and on which shamelessly reposed the tin candlestick.

How very far removed I was from the virtues of that good boy Karl. And only one thought comforted me in my self-abasement. Karl was already six, whereas a whole fortnight still separated me from that imposing age. If I used the period still left to me to effect a radical improvement in my nature, I should surely succeed in beginning a new period of virtuous life on my sixth birthday, a new epoch in which the example of that boy Karl could no longer abash me.

And the result? My socks still lie on the floor, if they are not by chance completely lost in the crumpled legs of my trousers.

And such has been the fate of *every* virtue all through my life.

About the same time lyrical poetry dawned on my horizon. I suppose that there were poems in the *Children's Friend*, but I do not remember that they made any impression on me, and the bundle of songs

which my mother had collected herself and the words to which she would have preferred to write herself was closed to me, but there was a lame tailor, Held, who lived at the edge of the forest just where you came out on the highroad to Russia in a brown, tumbled-down mud hut, and his daughter, Jette, was our nursemaid, and so it often happened that she took me off by the hand to visit her parents.

The low room was very stuffy, for there was only a narrow passage between the bench on which he worked and the great bed. This passage led to an opaque little window, and on the window sill there was a work basket at the very bottom of which there lay a volume scarcely larger than a man's fist, composed of that old soft paper on which the old chronicles were written which are so easy to fake into modern novels. This was the Arian volume and I was never tired of hearing it read to me, for I could not yet manage to make good with writing, although I could understand the pictures inset in the text at once. There was the "brave Lagienko" with the Polish cap, and the man whose cloak had endured the storms of thirty years. These I can see vividly before me still. No poetry has ever had a greater effect on me. There were stories pregnant with disaster and provocative of the deepest sympathy, which stood out in their full blood and thunder, giving me pictures of the tumult of warriors in battle and mortal need, intrenchments and brave wavings of flags, and all this in the fœtid heat of the tailor's little shop, in which he sang me song after song in a melancholy, nasal voice. And the result was to awaken in me a flaming desire to become a great hero one day and to be the savior of my country in its need.

To-day, it is true, the country could do with a great

hero, but unfortunately I have no time to carry out the rôle. I have to write, and besides, perhaps the country does not want to be saved.

At about the same time I had my first experience of God. I had, of course, long since been accustomed to say my evening prayers into the folded hands of my mother, and I had also heard a great deal about the Heavenly Father, without getting any clear idea on the subject. My father was omnipotent, and I could form no idea of the man who was always there and whom one was never able to see. I was not afraid of Him, but I was very inquisitive.

One Saturday evening—I am sure that is was a Saturday—I was sitting at the window and looking at the pictures in a volume of the *Gartenlaube*. (I shall have more to say about these volumes later on.) My attention was attracted by a drawing of Ludwig Richter, if I remember rightly, which portrayed a garden full of little angels, and it aroused in me an irresistible longing to go and play with the angels. I looked up to the evening sky, which was overhung with a rosy curtain of light, and suddenly the curtain divided and on the rays which reached to earth the little angels were descending rank after rank, full of joy. I no longer imagined that they were coming down to play with me—I was too old for that—but it was happiness enough to be allowed to watch them, and suddenly a hand was stretched out of the window of heaven, not threatening, but just warning me, and then it was no longer a hand, but an eye—God's eye looking to see that the little angels came to no harm.

And suddenly I understood how it was possible that God should be there and also *not* there and that I was all the same under his protection, and there arose in me a deep peace such as I had when I sat on my

mother's knee and was allowed to go to sleep against her breast.

That evening was the beginning of a pious period which lasted for quite a long time.

In the meanwhile I enlarged the boundaries of my own special realm. There was a piece of marshy land with pitch-black pools behind the barns of the farm. It was surrounded by slopes thickly covered with reeds, among which shone brightly colored flowers, and alder-covered islands arose mysteriously from its dark waters.

I was, of course, forbidden to play there, for unless one carefully tested the bank before treading on it, it was quite possible for a small boy to come to grief.

And one day I really did fall into the dark water, and the morass would have swallowed me up had it not been for some farm hands who were working in the neighborhood and who hastened to my assistance. And what do you suppose they did to me by way of punishment after they had pulled me out, covered with sticky mud, and I stood again on dry ground, weeping bitterly? They put me in a feeding trough and launched me on the water with long poles. There then I floated, and, once I had got over the first sensation of awful terror, I began to enjoy the new game. In fact, I fear the well-meant lesson had so little effect on me that a few days afterward I dragged the trough, which always stood there to water the cattle, with my own hands to the dark waters and undertook the voyage perilous on my own responsibility. I landed on the nearest island, and then pushed off from a bunch of alders and came back to the mainland, and this I managed several times; but one fine day I could not get back and remained stuck

fast in the reeds which wrapt themselves lovingly around my bark and would not let me go, and this time there were no friendly farm hands to release me.

The next few hours cost me many tears, and as many at least to my poor mother, who was looking for me, until in the evening the cowherds brought the cattle down to water and released me.

Thenceforth I avoided the treacherous waters, but there was much else in the world which was only waiting to bless my life with adventure, and thus it happened that I became a real water rat or otherwise it were a miracle that I am still able to sit here and write.

On the other side of the wood, which was soon crossed here, there lay the heath, completely surrounded in the distance by forest. I was also forbidden to run about here, for there were no landmarks to enable a small boy to find his way home, and once one began to run, one ran this way and that and always in the wrong direction.

But the heath had exercised its spell on me. The riddles of the distant world enticed me with a thousand beckoning fingers, and there was more to experience there than anywhere else in the whole world. Nowhere else did the dome of heaven seem wider spread above the world than there, and nowhere else did the clouds run a more complicated race. Nowhere else did the sun shine so hotly and nowhere else did it go to rest with a finer setting.

What could be finer in all this world than to lie in the grass of the heath and stare up into the sky? The larks sang their song of triumph in some invisible heights, and the bumblebees accompanied them with their bass viol harmonies close at hand. The grass blades which played around my forehead grew until

they were palm trees, and the insects which climbed up their stems became gigantic birds and dragons. The rays of light which pierced the edges of the thick grass seemed like green-red-golden fireworks and lit a flame of fire in every grain of sand.

And when I had got tired of resting, I could wander without end. First of all, of course, just to that clump of birches and then of course to that hillock crowned with pines, because it must naturally contain some great treasure such as a crow's nest or a fox's lair, and then farther and farther until the forest wall uprose threateningly and I did not know any more if it was the forest close to my home or it was a strange wood in which I could lose myself. For somewhere behind the forest lay Russia, the enchanted country where the Cossacks lived and the cakes we called Jew's locks, and also the raspberry sweets, but all the same "a bourne from which no traveler returned." And then I knew that I had lost my way and that mother was sitting at home and crying. At the end of many experiences of this nature I was always able to find my way home, but it often happened that I had severe headaches and fever.

But the greatest and most secret mystery which surrounded my young life is one which I have not yet mentioned—that was the forest at the back of our house. When you had crossed the courtyard of the farm, without exhibiting your natural pangs of fear at the attacks of the turkeys and the dogs' rattling chains, you made your way through the back way, which was still more expressly forbidden, because there was a wicked bull who thought nothing of tossing little boys on his horns and, further, assuming that you were lucky enough to escape him, you would naturally be sacrificed to the stallions, who would

stamp you to death with their hoofs; or if you were lucky enough to escape them, then there was the great boar who was not only addicted to eating his own young, but would certainly not spare other people's children. Besides, there were hedges through which you would have to creep and ditches which were far too wide to cross in safety.

And beyond all these "passages perilous" there lay the forest at our back, wrapped in blue haze, the enchanted forest, the forest which housed snakes and wolves and from which no small inquisitive boy had ever returned alive.

It became by degrees the secret dream with which I lulled myself to sleep, just to see that forest close at hand and just to trespass on its outer edges. Then it became the first thought of my drowsy awakening and finally the greatest wish in the world.

So it happened that one July afternoon, after my parents had taken the usual promise not to stir beyond the safe limits of the turf-cut seats in front of the house, I fell a victim to my dream.

I can assure you that I fared forth not in the least in the spirit of that Hans who wanted to learn "to shiver and shake." On the contrary, to tell you the truth, I was thoroughly scared. I was frightened of the turkeys, although they had never bitten anybody; then of the dogs, although they were securely fastened by their chains. And then, of course, the bull appeared. Gracious Heavens! the BULL! Yes, he stood directly in my path and glared at me, but I would rather have died than turned back. It is true that I paid him the honor of making a wide detour round him, but he in his turn did not seem to think that I was worth tossing.

Then came the horse pasture which I had to go straight across. But the stallions paid no attention

to me. The yearlings, it is true, came over and snuffled at me, but I knew that they would never hurt a little boy. As for the boar, he was not to be seen, and when I came to the ditches, some friendly genius had laid planks over them to smooth the path before my feet.

And so I suddenly found the magic forest before me. I ought to have turned back now, for I had reached my objective, but the forest seemed to me much, much more beautiful than any other wood which I had ever seen, and the wind which soughed in the treetops beckoned me on. After all, anyone who is going to be a hero must be incapable of fear. So with my heart in my mouth and step by step I ventured over the grass which led into the dark forest. I saw no wolves, and not a single snake wriggled forward to meet me, but a few mice made speed to get out of my path, over the dry leaves.

And then the silence became so intense that it seemed to speak; but the echo of my footsteps prevented me from hearing what it had to say. Meanwhile new flowers and strange bushes hindered my progress.

That must surely have been a wood different from all others. It had pillars covered with silver hair and green moss such as I had never seen before and which spread far and wide in every direction, so that the branches which drove their way upward were involved in inextricable confusion.

I don't know if the trees were simply beeches or whether later experiences have become confused in my memory and I can no longer test the accuracy of my impressions, as the whole wood has long since disappeared except for a few miserable specimens of brushwood, but I still think that it must have been an enchanted wood such as is rare in our northern

clime. Otherwise the impression which I have of something which was quite new in my experience, something holy and cathedral-like, could scarcely have had so great an effect on me. Otherwise I should not be able to experience again at my age the same shudder of reverence which I always experience when I recall that day.

Ferns sprang up like young palms all around me—ferns which I had never seen before; then a mass of flowers which shimmered first yellow and then like violet velvet according as the wind rose or sank. It was a glade of flowers the names of which I was to learn first six years later when I had become a great botanist.

Then suddenly I came across the river—the same, no doubt, that ruled my other wood, but yet as different from it as heaven from earth. It was obviously such a stream as lures fairies to bathe their hair in its secret pools.

And there was also a kind of rampart—a wall of snowy marble I should have called it had I known what marble was—brilliantly lit up by the afternoon sun, and thereon were three rows of fairy trees with branches as white as blossom, on which waved gold-green leaves like birds of paradise. They were only young birches—birches such as my eyes had seen ever since they opened to the light of day, and yet I thought I had never seen anything so wonderful.

Later, I often walked along the sandy cliff there, among the trees which are now no higher than they were fifty years ago, and always I have felt that I was really walking along the ramparts of Valhalla.

I met but a few strangers during the first seven years of my life, but a hop merchant from Nuremburg

who brought me a box of toys once made such an impression on me with his present that I can still see his kindly face before me.

The farm changed hands when I was about four years old. The outgoing family was called Westphal and my mother had enjoyed a warm friendship with its members, and there had also been a love affair concerning which she still gives me sly hints; but the newcomers never became intimate with us. I never got to know the sons even when we came to live almost opposite one another at Heydekrug.

Heydekrug, the seat of the local administration and market, which in conjunction with three or four other straggling villages formed a community almost like a town, possessed a "Ressource," the social center of the middle-class people between the gentry and the artisans, and three or four times during the winter there was a dance preceded by a theatrical performance given in the Roscius rooms.

I could not imagine what this "theater" could be. My mother might describe it as often as she liked, but I could make nothing of it. But I soon understood that it must be something incredibly wonderful and beautiful. I thought that it must be like all the stories I have ever heard, all the fairy tales I told myself in secret coming true, turning into living realities dreams which were yet not dreams, longing satisfied, Deity made visible, marzipan cakes mountain high, and a Christmas which never came to an end—that, I thought, was what the theater must be like.

The preparations for such a visit to the theater always filled the house with the same kind of festive confusion. The lights before the mirror were lighted, father must wear a shirt with a stiff front, the crinoline did not fit properly, as usual, the lace cap had to be

altered because the ribbons came too low on the neck, the tortoise-shell comb was lost, and then finally *the* shawl was unfolded.

You have no idea what that shawl meant. It was the very summit of earthly splendor, the standard of all possible splendor of color, beauty, refinement, and enchantment. All of this was contained in the shawl which lay carefully folded up in oil paper from one festivity to another.

My brothers had been put to bed, but I sat fairly dazed with the greatness of the occasion, silent in a corner, and thought to myself, "Now they are off to the *theater*."

And when I had had my good-night kiss and promised to be very good, and the sleigh bells tinkled outside, and the lights before the mirror had been extinguished and Jette came and begged me "to be a good little boy and go to bed," then *my* fun began, for I nestled down in the corner allotted to the children and played "theater" until my eyes closed and I had no more power to resist the buttoning, tending hands of Jette.

But the next morning I was sure to find a piece of marzipan cake on my bed which my mother had brought me, and that was the first greeting which the future scene of my activities sent me.

And then one Sunday morning my father said to my mother, "I think he is old enough now and that we can take him to church."

My heart leaped with joy, for the great white house with the pointed spire which nestled mysteriously behind the dark green of the larches at Werden had long been the goal of my secret ambitions. I had on my best suit, and so it was only necessary to add my Sunday cap and off we went.

I had never seen a "hall" before, and I at once

thought that this enormous building which reached up to the roof beams without a break and which was so long that the cloth-covered altar and cross which stood at the other end seemed like toys, must be a real hall. And there were so many people present, almost more than I had ever seen at one time at the weekly market.

I remember nothing of the organ or the hymns, but suddenly something occurred which I shall never forget to my dying day. Far, far off, where all seemed so reduced in size, there appeared a little figure, clad in black, from a side door, and glided or floated—I could not see which—to the altar which was raised much above the benches on which we sat, and, taking up his position before the altar, began to speak and sing to us in a deep, beautiful voice.

My heart was sorrowful and solemn, as though the Lord were speaking to me, and suddenly I knew. "This is what the theater is like."

And when, later on, the little figure resolved itself into a human being who ascended a balcony even higher than the altar and spoke thence so earnestly to the congregation that they began to snuffle and sob all round me, the idea persisted, "Such, and not otherwise, must the theater be."

Only here there was nothing to laugh at, while mother had often said, after a visit to the theater, that it had been very amusing, although she always added that she herself preferred the sad pieces.

And then and there I also decided to like them best.

CHAPTER II

ON MY OWN SOIL

THE twilight gray of my earliest years grows brighter. Memories are more definite and more closely connected. I see a small boy, close on seven, with a sealskin satchel on his back, making his way boldly along the long road through woodland and meadow to school. The fears of earlier days have vanished. He will even climb nimbly on to the country cart of some friendly Lithuanian who stops to give him a lift and jump down as nimbly to dart off into the forest.

These journeys did not last long, only from August till October, and then school was over. What the name of the kindly man was who used to hold me, a struggling, yelling little rascal, so lovingly between his knees while he spanked me, I forget. And then I stayed at home until November, when the great change in my young life occurred which removed me from the lonely farm in the forest into the great world.

My father had so far been only a tenant of the farmer, but by endless labor, worry, and economy he had scraped enough together to make the first payment for a piece of land of his own and build a brewery on it.

The little house in which I dreamed my first poet's dreams, and in which many a night long I spoiled page after page of beautiful white paper with my scribbling and in which up to my thirtieth year I found a haven of refuge and rest after many a wild wandering, still stands, painfully renovated and half

sunken into the ground, and my old mother lives almost opposite to it. I wanted to buy it and have it repaired, but as I should have had to have it pulled down and rebuilt like the old brewery in which I was born, which is now a dwelling house, and as my mother also said that she would not feel safe enough in her holy of holies without some one to live with her, I abandoned my dream, but I feel a prick of conscience every time I visit the old home and pass the dear old house, which approaches its end more certainly every year.

In those days it was shining white and brand new, and the arbor in front, which my mother cared for with her own hands unwearied, shone invitingly with benches for the weary beneath its greenery.

The beginning of the new epoch was gloomy enough, it must be confessed. I devoted a few lines in the second chapter of *Frau Sorge* to that November day on which we set out from our neck of the woods into the strange world. Indeed *Frau Sorge* (Dame Care) abode continually with us. The verses which I wrote as a preface to it are no work of the imagination, although my old father was cross with me when he read them. "The boy will destroy the last vestiges of my credit," he said, "and it has never been as bad as that, for I always took care that we had enough to eat."

True enough, dear old father, who fell asleep thirty-five years ago after your life of hard toil, you always took care that there was enough to eat, and, now that I have more than enough, I should like to repay you a thousandfold for what you did for me. Instead of which I fear that I have much to say of you which is not to your credit. Forgive me. I shall not spare myself, either.

And just here I should like to speak of my father's origin. He was the descendant of Mennonite peasant stock from the Elbing Valley, in which, as at Marienburg, the Great Elector settled the followers of that sect when they were expelled from Holland on account of their faith. My grandfather was called Daniel after that religious poet of the sixteenth century who is stated in many handbooks of literature to be my ancestor. Just as other parvenus purchase a gallery of ancestors, I have acquired a poet ancestor, or rather I have never denied it when well-meaning biographers have endeavored to make my literary mission more important by deducing my descent from that pious pedant. It may be so or it may not. Who can prove it? As a matter of fact, my family chronicles end in no aristocratic fashion, with the small farmer who is said to be buried in a corner of the churchyard at Wickerau, about ten miles from Elbing.

Why my father did not become a farmer like him I do not know. Instead he went into the town to learn the brewing business. Probably he saw little hope of ever being independent, for he was the younger son and his father was the second husband of my grandmother. I never heard that he ever had any regular education, and to begin with he was probably no more than a hired hand in the brewery. But he was talented and hard working and read and learned unceasingly, so that, ten years later, he was able to hold the responsible position of master brewer at Liebemuhl, near Fischhausen. There he made the acquaintance of my mother, who, as the daughter of a ship captain's widow, was rather above him in station, although she was as poor as a church mouse.

Shy and convinced of his own unworthiness, he did

not become a suitor for her hand until much later. First he went to Courland in a similar situation, to save up money to get married on, and in this he must have succeeded, for after some years he came back to make sure of his happiness. His proposal was accepted, and on his way back to Courland to lay the foundation of his household he was held up by snowdrifts about ten miles from the Russian frontier. While he was waiting impatiently in an inn at Heydekrug for the post sleigh, he heard from some one at his table that a brewery was to let not far off, which seemed to have been designed for him.

So it came to pass that I was born between the forests and that the Memel country, loved and now lost, became my home. But for those snowdrifts, I should have been a Russian German to-day, or the Letts might have finished me off.

To begin with, I and two younger brothers were sent to a school kept by a Frau Hugenberger, the wife of a clergyman. She was a temperamental woman with a fine figure, a character made up of whims and enthusiasms, who came finally to a sad end in poverty and loneliness. She had left her husband because he ill treated her, and had taken her two daughters with her. These she treated every bit as badly as she herself may have been treated. Both were young—two impertinent, red-nosed children always ready for mischief of any kind. They sat together with us on the same bench and were always ready to encourage the natural spirit of resistance to authority, which was usually concealed under a cloak of secret whispering. If they took anyone into their confidence, he or she at once became a member of a higher class of humanity, but one who was not admitted to

their circle hung his or her head in shame and disgrace.

These early school years, however little I may have learned in them, were of far-reaching importance for my mental development. During them I learned the passionate devotion with which a person can hold and nourish a conviction. And so lasting was this early molding, that the later years of discretion could not change it.

If I was religious before, I now became so pious that nothing could satisfy my ardor. When the schoolmistress in her morning prayer made supplication for us as penitent lambs before the throne of grace, my self-abasement was such that I often resolved to take my life because I was not worthy to live. But she also taught me to see the goodness of God and awakened paroxysms of joy in me, which I could only master by taking refuge in the topmost barley loft, where I could look out through an open shutter on God's green world beneath me, and knelt there singing and weeping. No power on earth could have kept me from going to church on Sundays, and if my parents were obliged to stay at home, then I, small as I was, set out by myself for my tramp, which was at least a mile and a half each way. And after I had seen Pastor Hoffheinz, who was just as passionate a devotee in his own way, kneeling and sobbing before the altar, I was not nearly satisfied, but I must needs go on to the Catholic church and hear mass. Then when I got home faint with hunger, if the dinner was not actually on the table, I would go up into the gable room in which we children slept with our grandmother, hang a gayly colored bedcover around me, and celebrate the sacred office myself, for I had heard that the celebrant must be fasting to be able to do so.

Frau Pfarrer Hugenberger nourished another passionate devotion in me as well, and that was loyalty to the royal family. The memory of that emotional period was very valuable to me later on, for I have always been able to understand what was going on in the heads and hearts of those who have been brought up, on the old Prussian lines, to regard the king and throne as the center of all earthly thinking and feeling, and to obey the king's orders faithfully unto death. I must admit that this association of throne and altar, of divinity and kingship, is not without a certain blessed harmony, even though it be only adapted for the poor in spirit. I wept many more tears over the sufferings of Queen Louise, who, as everybody knows, died of a broken heart in consequence of the disgrace which had befallen her country, than I did over the country's disgrace; and the enormous liver sausage, I forget how many yards in length, which was carried through the streets by the butchers' guild at the coronation of the king at Königsberg and then divided among the rejoicing multitude, was for me the high-water mark of human enjoyment.

It is true that a change soon supervened in my opinions, but of that more later.

Generally speaking, what the mistress taught us was a wild mixture, but there was much that was precious concealed in the mixture. Everything she told us was told with imagination and awakened the imagination. The world, and the world's history no less, were presented to us in a series of pictures. I saw Cæsar murdered then much better than I have seen him die since at the Deutsches Theater and when it came to the entry of King Frederick William III into Breslau in March, 1813, I too stood among the volunteers and swore in his presence to die for the liberation of

Prussia. I was as much at home on the glaciers of Monte Rosa as under the palm groves of the Orinoco. I have been an exile in Siberia and tended the lepers there, and stretched myself in the warm wave-washed sands of the Fiji Islands.

The lady suffered much from colds in the head, and in order to save pocket handkerchiefs she would come into the schoolroom in the morning with a bedcover, which was often held up like a train by one of her daughters. She spread this round her desk so that when she sat down she seemed to be surrounded by clouds, and it often seemed, especially in the twilight of the afternoon, as if she were able to muster pictures and shapes from these clouds in endless procession, so that one finally did not know where one was, and when school was over had to be painfully awakened to real life again.

There was another "lady" who educated me at that time, and to her I am eternally indebted. She broadened my mind and opened my heart, increased the multitude of pictures which thronged my imagination a thousandfold, and definitely determined the trend of my convictions.

There was an enormous chest at home, filled right up to the top with more or less ragged pages of the *Gartenlaube* (a periodical which the Germans are polite enough to regard as feminine), which ran back from the year 1864 to 1854. They had been the intellectual nourishment of my father during his wanderings and he had brought them with him when he married. The numbers which he had had sent to him in Russia were easily distinguished by smears of bright black ink, which covered sometimes half a page or even a whole page and awakened an insatiable desire to know what the Russian censor had considered

a seductive heresy or mentally pestilential. But no scratching or moistening or crumpling helped at all. The pages still lie in my mother's attic, but, alas! the black ink which was to protect the Tsar has proved more durable than the dynasty which sought its protection.

But there was still quite enough left to take the backbone out of the exaggerated loyalty to the royal family which the schoolmistress had inculcated in me. The *Gartenlaube* was, up to the war with Austria, the main democratic standard bearer and the keeper of the conscience of those Germans who were lovers of freedom, and it was not till later that, under the influence of Bismarck's magic, it came to regain its faith in the divine mission of the Hohenzollerns and went over into the enemy's camp. But the numbers which fell into my hands at that time still breathed sound and fury. The storms of 1848 still re-echoed from every page and each page carried in invisible ink the vow that vengeance should speedily follow. It thus happened that between my eighth and tenth birthdays I ceased to be a train bearer of old Prussian vassaldom and became a wild-eyed barricade fighter, and even when I was nearly in the top class of the school I still cherished the secret desire to perish on the scaffold for my ideals. But still more vivid was the feeling which arose in me that democracy and its leaders alone possessed a monopoly of honest conviction, while all those who could serve a monarch must necessarily be rogues. But that did not prevent me from acquiring a fervent devotion to German imperialism after the war of 1870 or from paying a timid but grateful tribute to the legend which made that achievement appear the awakening of the Emperor Barbarossa from his centuries-long sleep in his cavern

under the Kyffhäuser hills. It is not difficult to-day to pass over all that with a superior smile, but you young people who have seen the sunset of the imperial dignity have no idea how fine that noble folly was.

I was not able to appreciate the easy triumphs of the war of 1866 completely. Otherwise some sharply defined memory of those summer weeks would have remained with me. Soldiers on the march, a few special editions, and the *Neu Ruppin Picture Chronicle* are all that I can recall of that period. The story of the Düppeler trenches had, however, a much greater effect on me, the greater because with the help of a few spadefuls of earth it was possible to reconstruct the whole battle.

But it was not only a taste for politics which those ragged old pages gave me. They also opened to me the doors of epic poetry. You will laugh when you hear the names of Ruppius and Temme and will not be able to believe that these long-forgotten authors were able to pour out immeasurable stores of treasure for their successors. They might write what they liked. The one wrote second-hand detective stories about my eastern German home which I did not recognize; the other, simple stories of emigrants. My voracious imagination sucked up nourishment from every stone and added to my boyish existence a dozen other lives which I dreamed and made so real to myself that I sometimes scarcely knew to which of them my body really belonged.

I suppose that every really imaginative child goes through the same process, but I think that few have the opportunity of developing their imaginative powers as freely as I did.

About this time my father got into difficulties. People would not drink his brown beer. It was no

worse than that of the other brewers, but he lacked the capacity to push himself and his wares. There was his competitor, for instance, Herr Münsterberg of Werden, who was a very different sort of chap. His fashionable jampot collars and his cigar case sown with imposing seed pearls accompanied him from inn to inn, and I should like to have seen the landlord who could resist his blandishments as he extolled the virtues of his beer and persuaded him to buy it. And when the morning showed us the dray from the Werden brewery loaded mountain high with barrels going past on the street, we all stood anxiously behind the curtain, and my mother pressed her hand against her heart and retreated silently to the back of the house.

And then came the hardest year of all—the "hungry year."

The summer of 1867 gave us no sunshine at all. From the beginning of June we had nothing but dripping, soaking, driving rain. The ground was saturated, the rye could not ripen, and the fields looked like mud threshing floors, for all the stalks lay flat and brown and glistening with moisture on the ground. But worst of all, the potatoes rotted. When we dug them up at the end of August for food, they were as small as hazelnuts and worm eaten from end to end. We saw no blue sky until autumn set in with the middle of September, but by then all was lost. That meant being hungry and in some cases it meant starvation. For in such circumstances who was going to drink beer when every penny represented a treasure!

So Mr. Tightbelt became the *chef* in the home of the Sudermanns. When I tell you to-day that the butter gradually vanished from the table, that the days on which we tasted meat were few and far between, and that white rolls only appeared on Sundays, that will

perhaps scarcely impress you, for we have all passed through still more evil days and the majority are still passing through them. But do not forget that what we are going through to-day will make our grandchildren shudder—that is to say if they still exist. Any young girl of to-day will in the years to come only need to tell the story of what she has been through, to pass as the fabulous aunt who makes the children's flesh creep with fairy tales; only these tales will be no imagination, but bitter reality.

And in those days there were many who were much poorer than we were. They lay in the ditches by the side of the road, the whole family together, and could go no further, for weakness. The beggars never gave the door bell a moment's peace the whole day long, and if they received the usual two-pfennig piece they became abusive, for one cannot eat copper. It was particularly bad on market days, for then they literally besieged the door and fought with one another for the privilege of entry, while my mother shared our last morsel with them. The potatoes, bad and small as they were, were boiled in large pots and handed out to the poor devils outside, who ate them boiling hot, skins and all.

We did not like letting them come into the house, for the vermin they left behind them soon made its presence felt. Every evening there was the usual hunt through one's shirt and trousers and if she had only known then how typhus is handed on, my mother would have been still more anxious than she was.

When the hard East Prussian winter came on the misery reached its height. In truth, our own misery vanished before that which met us daily, shivering and teeth chattering, around us. And then there was the poverty which was too proud to show itself! My

mother was as brave as usual. She went from village to village with other ladies of the Ladies' League, giving help and care where care and help seemed like a miraculous dispensation of Providence.

And so Christmas drew on and we children were told that owing to the prevailing want there could be no question of Christmas presents. We must be thankful and remember those who had never had a Christmas tree in their lives. This hit us very hard and of all the privations which the "hungry year" imposed on us, this was certainly the hardest. But in our heart of hearts we could not help feeling that things *could* not get so bad and that mother would contrive something. There were also signs that preparations were going on all the time, which hinted at something great and secret. During the week before Christmas we could not go to sleep, and as soon as grandmother began to breathe more deeply behind the screen which surrounded her bed we slipped quietly out of bed and downstairs to reconnoiter and find out what was going on. There we stood one after the other, in our nightshirts, shivering with cold on the icy floor, the right eye glued to the keyhole, the glimmer from which told us that mother was still up. Whether it were midnight or two o'clock or three, mother was still sitting at her work table, sewing. But there were no signs at all of any decorations for a Christmas tree, nor even a gilded apple.

Consequently, we lost all hope during the day, but every night we began the game of hoping afresh.

Christmas Eve dawned and we searched every corner of the house, but we could not find the faintest trace of a Christmas tree, and when we flung our arms round mother's neck she remained firm: "This year there will be no Christmas presents."

Had it not been for the gentle and embarrassed smile with which she released herself from our embraces and for the fact that, in our house, the old coast custom was kept up of lighting the Christmas tree on Christmas morning and not the evening before, we should have given up all hope. But that night not one of the three of us closed an eye. When midnight struck we slipped down for the first time. Mother was still at her work table. At one o'clock we stole down for the second time, and then the keyhole was covered up. Had we awakened grandmother during one of the preceding nights and had she betrayed us? Or had we made a noise when we came downstairs the last time? However that might be, this new secrecy boded no evil.

The light was still burning at two o'clock, and again at three, but at four it had been extinguished. At five we got up and dressed and sat on our chairs so that we should be sure not to miss the great moment when it came.

At six grandmother awoke and said, "I haven't had a wink of sleep all night, all owing to you, you naughty children." At seven she lighted her candle and began to dress herself behind her screen. It is true that she usually did this at this time, but to-day was a holiday and why should she do so to-day? Then she added, "Children who are *so* naughty that they keep their old grandmother awake can surely not expect to get Christmas presents." And then our confidence was again brought to naught.

At half-past seven the first rays of morning broke through the window. There was now no longer any hope left, for the Christmas tree may not burn by day. But suddenly—and even as I write it my heart leaps again—a deep-toned noise like a church bell—"boom!

boom! boom!"—resounded through the house, and when we dashed downstairs and tore open the door of the sitting room, there was a Christmas tree burning as brightly as its predecessors had burned in prosperous years. And around it lay the gayly decorated plates and presents, which seemed to be not less numerous than they usually were.

It is true that if one looked more closely into them one noticed that a little horse was missing from the stable, or that the hilt of a sword was attached to the blade with a piece of wire. Ill-natured people might have said that the presents were old acquaintances, but we were amazed and overjoyed and had never had a richer Christmas.

When we were older mother told us how she managed the presents. Altogether, she had spent the enormous sum of three marks, seventy-five pfennigs.

Well, even the winter of the "hungry year" passed, and when the waters of the Haff had thawed there appeared one morning in the market place at Heydekrug, two large barges of a quite unusual capacity, such as we had never seen before. They had come to us by sea from Stettin and were laden up to their bulwarks with potatoes—potatoes as large as eggs, smooth skinned, and golden yellow, such as had almost vanished from our memories.

The people crowded around the barges and looked at the miracle with incredulous eyes. Then the relief committee got to work and things improved.

But so far I have told you nothing about my old grandmother. I suppose that every human being has a bit of poetry concealed in his person of which he is unconscious and of which others know still less, and this bit of poetry is occasionally a bit of luck, but it usually means unhappiness.

She was the widow of a ship's captain, as I have previously mentioned. Her name was Charlotte Raabe and she spent most of her life in a little house completely concealed in lilacs and lime trees on a slope of the Schwalbenberg, from the heights of which one has a wide, outspread view over Pillau and the Haff and the Baltic. It is crowned now by a landmark, an immense building of brick, but which did not then exist. It so happened that just as her five children—three girls and two boys—were reaching the age when they had to be educated, her husband, whose ship had started on a long voyage to the Indies, did not return, nor did his ship. And then, as soon as her family could spare her, she climbed the Schwalbenberg daily, morning and evening, summer and winter. She was told by the neighbors that the ship was lost and that her husband would never return to her, but she paid no attention to talk of that kind and continued to wait for him, and if she were alive to-day she would still be waiting for him. But she was never led away mentally by her loss. On the contrary, she mastered her difficulties with a clear vision and busy hands. Until her children were grown up, she *brought* them up to fear the Lord and under a stern discipline. One of the boys entered a teachers' seminary, while her eldest daughter married a mason. The youngest married a gentleman. The second daughter was my mother. And when, at last, she had disposed of all her children, she suddenly discovered that she herself had no abiding habitation. She had given her little house to the eldest daughter; but the family was very poor, and when she came to look over her other children she found that the people they had married jarred somewhat. In short, she moved from here to there, not knowing where she could lay her head to rest.

Finally she came to my parents' house, in which she also died. My father was always kind to her, but she was "cross"—that is to say, of course, what we urchins called "cross." Poor woman, she often cried half the night behind her screen. She could tell us the most wonderful stories. She had seen Napoleon with her own eyes and had been so terrified by the thunder of the guns at the battle of Friedland that she had stopped her ears with cotton wool. She came of good middle-class stock, her ancestors had been precentors and doctors, and one of the friends of her youth, whom I also visited, was a certain "Aunt" Ulrika von York, a niece of the great general.

When the north wind howled round our house in the winter evenings and the curtains bellied out in the cold draught, then she came into her own. We sat there enthralled by the tragic story of Prussia's years of misery. How little we thought that we should see a much greater catastrophe.

Winter meant for us one great festival. It meant skating!

To-day I hate the winter, and regard the short months during which one can become warm, and during which there are some signs of greenery, as a period during which I do my best to take advantage of this miserable gift of Providence; I find it difficult to understand the enthusiasm with which we greeted the first frost. It is true the home of my youth was probably the skater's paradise, owing to the fact that its streams and flooded meadows were frozen over for a long time, with brief intervals when it thawed, and these thaws only served to clear the ice of snow and give the skater such a sheet of ice as existed probably nowhere else in Germany.

It mattered not how severe my father might be or what my mother's fears might mean. Both were helpless as against this passionate desire to go skating. If I was shut in, I escaped through some window, and if my parents had taken away my skates I could always make myself a new pair out of pieces of wood and brass strips, and, as a matter of fact, that we did actually do with God's help more than once.

As soon as the temperature sank below twenty degrees Reaumur and it seemed impossible that we could reach home without having our fingers and the tips of our noses frozen, then we had to stay at home, and that cost us tears beyond counting. But otherwise we were as free as the wind. The only crime which seriously affected our parents was that of breaking the ice and falling into the water, and if we came home with our clothes wet we got thrashed.

After a period of very severe frost, during which we, muffled up to the eyes, were only allowed to go to school, a warmer wind prevailed. It was only sixteen degrees of frost, Reaumur, almost like a July day by comparison, and then, of course, nobody could hold us.

I took out my brother Otto, who was a year and a half younger than I was, and played about on the ice of the river Sziesze, which the milder wind had swept for us as if it had been ordered to do so.

We naturally never thought of anything like danger or uncertainty. There were, of course, as is the case with all running water, places which never freeze over properly. These are always known to the local inhabitants, and I also knew most of them pretty well, but I thought that this eternal frost must have brought *some* good in its train, and therefore I went ahead without worrying about anything, and before I became aware of it I had run into some thin ice and

did not recover my senses until I found myself treading water and hanging on to the edge of the ice.

Had I been going a little faster I should never have been seen again. However, my brother got me out somehow. And now what were we to do? It was impossible to go home with wet clothes; there had recently been a row for a similar reason and we had been threatened with the loss of our skates.

There is only *one* remedy for such cases. It is to undress, hang one's clothes on a tree, and wait until they dry, and this we adopted. My brother helped me to take off my skates, but, to be on the safe side, I kept my boots on. However, my overcoat, coat, and trousers were soon waving in the wind on the nearest tree, as we had planned.

My shirt ceased dripping after a few minutes and we hailed this as a great success, while the gentle air whistled lovingly about my shivering legs.

Well, there I stood and watched the process of drying with longing eyes. It proceeded with unexpected rapidity. The trousers did not feel in the least damp, but when one rubbed one leg against the other there was a noise as if two stones were being rubbed against each other, and that seemed uncanny to us. "I think I had better put them on," I said to my brother; but when I came to put my resolve into practice we discovered, to our horror, that they were frozen together inside as firmly as if they had been made of one piece. With the aid of a skate we got them separated until they were two tubes which were able to stand up on the ice unassisted. Into these tubes I inserted myself, as also into the forcibly opened arms of my jacket, and then we went home. I need hardly say that we ran pretty fast.

Mother had already lighted the lamp and took

stock of us casually. "Didn't you find it too cold?" she asked.

"Oh, it was splendid!" I answered, congratulating myself secretly that she hadn't touched us. "Now," I thought, "if I got close to the hot stove my clothes must surely be dry by supper time." So I refused some lukewarm coffee and got as close as I could to the stove.

The usual family evening circle formed round the table by the sofa. My mother bent over her sewing basket, my grandmother knitted, and my next two brothers—the youngest had not got so far—sat down virtuously to their lessons. Meanwhile I sat by the stove and shivered.

It so happened, however, that mother let her work fall and stooped to pick it up. Then she stooped again, and this time her gaze was riveted on the floor.

"What is this?" she asked, pointing to a crack between the boards of the floor down which a thin dark stream of water was flowing. She followed the stream back with her finger to its source, which was, of course, the place on which my boots rested close to the stove.

She got up, came straight over to me, and passed her questioning hands over my body. Further attempts at concealment were useless. But this time I didn't get a hiding, nor even a scolding. I was hurried off to bed, was given hot elder tea, and next morning I was none the worse.

Oh, those splendid skating trips far out into the country! Later on I tried to become a figure skater, but without success—I never got further than a figure 3, backwards—but all the bliss of satisfying a feverish ambition is as nothing compared with the spirit of adventurous discovery with which my

childish mind sped with winged feet into the blue distance.

I have since seen many of the wonders of the world. I have seen the glittering glacier spread out before my feet. I have wandered on a swaying camel, steering my way by compass over the granite-studded, limitless space of the Libyan Desert. I have crossed the Indian Ocean like the blessed gods and forced the dank green shades of primeval tropical forests to reveal their secrets to me. But the most beautiful wonder of all was given me in my poor Lithuanian home. Toward the end of the winter, in March, when the first thaw has turned the wide expanse of meadow into a boundless lake in which farms or clumps of trees stand up like islands, it often happens that a short period of frost, not very severe, will set in again, with wonderful blue spring skies, and if there is no wind it becomes ridiculously hot at midday.

The expanse of water is covered again with a thin sheet of ice, which melts slowly by day, to get thicker again by night. It is just strong enough to bear a skater and is so clear and transparent that one does not see it even when one is directly over it. On the contrary, one only sees the green grass underneath it and the little fishes flashing off into the ditches. If it were not for the music of the skates as they cut the ice, one would have the illusion of being released from earth and of floating in the air. And at last one really comes to believe it. Never, not even in a dream, have I had the illusion of flying so completely as on those clear, sunny days of March, when heaven and earth blended into each other and all sense of slowness and of weight vanished n smiling delight.

The great river, which was at other times almost a mythical stream to us, for it was about five miles

away and too far off for our young legs, lay in majestic peace before us—in about ten minutes. Then there were white mounds of earth, the sides of which were covered with shining blue mirrors from which one's imagination fared forth far into the wide world and one's heart beat the faster for being so near to faeryland.

For faeryland it was, quivering in unlimited, light-drenched space. The river grew broader and broader and suddenly it vanished, had been dissolved into a measureless sea of flashing light. The eye lost itself in the streams of violet splendor which poured over broad crystal bridges. The blue stretches to the right and left which were lost in the haze of the distance were not the same blue as that of the ice inland. They were shot through and sparkled with points of light, as if the ice had swallowed a starry heaven. At points the ice was intersected by narrow black strips. These were the open stretches, the terror of the sleigh driver, for to drive into one of these was to drive into the jaws of death.

Should we turn back? No, no; farther and farther on, in spite of a beating heart and deadly peril. Rather let us drink a draught of eternity and become a speck like that sleigh which far, far in the distance crawls like a tiny black dot straight across the Haff.

The ice rang beneath our skates, the cracks resounded to them, and we sped into the sea of light until it began to turn purple, until the blue changed to pink and the pale March moon shone out suddenly in the sky.

Then, however, for home. The evening frost came on, our clothes steamed, and we were only too happy if we could climb over the river dam in the gathering dusk.

And then suddenly everything turned to silver. Roofs, clumps of trees, the blue ice, and even the grass, which lay enchanted under spring's glassy cover, all were silver, but the fishes had gone to sleep. And when we had gotten to the bank near home and stamped up to the house with stiff legs, we never knew exactly where we had been. Was it a dream land, or a meadow of heaven, or in that faery garden the golden door to which is only opened to Fortune's favored children?

It was on just such a March day that Frau Hugenberger's daughters ran away.

When we came along to the schoolroom we found our teacher, in hat and cloak, running up and down between the benches, crying and wringing her hands. "What ingratitude!" she wailed. "What degenerate creatures! Oh, the serpents that I have cherished in my bosom, for whom I chewed every morsel before it reached their mouths, and whose drink I warmed in my hands! . . . But I'll go after them. I'll catch them, and then I'll punish them as children have never been punished before. . . . And I know who their confederates are. I know who helped them to hatch this nice little plot."

With that she swept her glance threateningly along our ranks and we sniggered guiltily together.

"You can have a holiday for to-day," she continued, "but to-morrow I will turn my attention to you and give you scant shrift. And then, God have mercy on you and your children and children's children, you who have committed such a horrible sin." This was her usual manner of speech and not due simply to the catastrophe.

With that she flounced out of the room, for the

vehicle in which she was going to pursue the fugitives was heard outside.

We children—ten or twelve we were—made haste to turn home and make the best of this unexpected holiday. Then I noticed that Ottilie—Ottilie Settegast, the dear little blonde with two little pigtails down her back, the one of my companions whom I liked best, was sitting crying in a corner.

I knew at once why, for it was not for nothing that for weeks past she had been as thick as thieves with the two runaways and was always whispering with them in corners; and as she was the daughter of a farmer who lived some distance off—his place was called Oszkarten—and was allowed to stay in the school at noon and warm up her food in the teacher's kitchen, she had more than enough opportunities to help to brew the plot.

My heart grew tender with pity for her. I waited until my brothers and all the others had gone, and then went over to her to ask what was wrong.

She answered that there was nothing the matter with her and that I should go away. But I was not to be put off so easily. I said: "Even if you really had something to do with it, it doesn't matter. I would have helped, too, but you didn't take me into your confidence."

Then she weakened. "What am I to do?" she wailed. "Here I am all alone, and the carriage won't come to fetch me until evening."

"Go to your uncle," I suggested. Her uncle was the old apothecary Settegast, of whom I shall have much to tell later on.

But, no, that she couldn't do. If he saw her red eyes he would know that she had been crying and that something was amiss and then she would be scolded.

"Well then, come skating," I suggested.

Yes, she would like that, but she had no skates. I told her I would get her some and started to run off, but she begged me so anxiously not leave her alone that I took her with me and kept her waiting at our garden gate until I had with difficulty bargained with my brother Franz for his skates, with which he was just about to set out. The price was ten trousers buttons, which, it is true, I did not possess, but I would have cut them off my Sunday clothes, if need be, to get the skates.

We didn't go to the meadows; that would have meant passing the apothecary shop; but behind the village there was a low-lying field, round about a sandy hillock, which was usually flooded at this time of year. This was used only by the public-school children and they didn't count.

I have not forgotten one moment of that morning. We played in the March sun like kittens, and an inner voice in me asked:

"Why is it? Why is it? Why is the world so beautiful? And why is it so nice to hold Ottilie's hand? And when she speaks, why is it that her words seem so different to those of any other person whom I have ever heard?"

And she had so much confidence in me. She told me all about her secret diary and the escapades of her big brothers who were at school at Memel. And there was also a friend of theirs, whom they had brought with them at Xmas and who admired her immensely, but she didn't care for him. And then I knew that I, too, admired her immensely and I could have murdered him, even though she did not care for him.

About midday we got hungry. She was afraid to go back to the teacher's empty house, and I, for my

part, could not risk bringing her home to dinner, for we were not accustomed to ask strange guests to meals. Also, in those days the tablecloth was of American cloth.

I therefore determined to stay with her, ran home quickly, and under the pretext that the school teacher had asked me to look after her house, which she had not locked up, I got permission not to come to dinner. I even got two thickly covered sandwiches so that I should not feel faint.

We then kept house together until the evening. We lit the fire and warmed up her dinner. She had sausage soup with her, that I remember to this day, which she poured out of a jar with a broad neck such as one uses for preserves, and a pancake folded together, from which I was allowed to take bites. Nothing had ever tasted so good to me in all my life.

Then we washed up like experienced housemaids and tidied up the whole house. Our zeal was boundless and we continually discovered more work to do until the carriage which was to take Ottilie home suddenly stood before the door.

My heart had gradually become so full that I was almost glad when she drove away. Now I was left alone in the empty schoolroom, which had suddenly become ice cold, for we had not thought of lighting a fire there, and I began to be afraid. But I had no heart to go home. I had the feeling that something must happen, something great, something joyous, something which had never happened before.

She had left her satchel behind her. Perhaps she would tell the coachman to turn back and fetch it. I looked through her copy books and kissed the place on which her hand had last rested. I sat down in her place and stroked the edge of the desk against which

she leaned. And all the time I became more and more afraid, for it was beginning to get dark.

Then at last I took my courage in both hands, laid the key under the straw mat, and ran for it.

That evening I sat until bedtime in the corner by the stove, in the dark front room, and built castles in the air of how I should grow up to be a great man—a general, or a minister of state, or a poet—and how I would then come home some day and ask the landed proprietor, Herr Settegast, for the hand of his daughter, which could not then be refused to me on the ground that my father did not belong to the gentry.

The next morning both the scapegraces were in their places, as if nothing had happened, and Frau Hugenberger interwove a petition into her morning prayer in which she spoke of misguided daughters whom God's mercy had restored to the forgiving arms of a sorely tried mother. Thence we proceeded, tranquilized, to the conjugation of French verbs.

I looked over carelessly to where Ottilie sat as if nothing had happened. She had folded her arms over the grammar and her pigtails overhung the page. My eyes begged and pleaded and I made at least four mistakes, for which I got into trouble, but even then she would not look at me.

None the less, something must have leaked out of our day together and its consequences, for one day a note, carefully folded, was passed to me in the middle of a lesson, on which was written, "O. S. is in love with H. S." I wrote underneath, "H. S. is in love with O. S." and sent the note back. It was greeted with endless tittering among the girls, but Ottilie was cross with me and would not speak to me any more.

That caused me heartbreaking misery for weeks, and the dark corner by the stove received desperate

oaths and heroic resolves without end. Then one day the same post brought me a pill box. It contained a blue pearl ring and on the bottom of the box was written in pencil, "O. S. for H. S." This time I did not answer, for a glance at Ottilie's crimson face told me that there was some plot on foot. I never found out whether the ring really came from her or not, but I kept it for many months as a sacred treasure.

One day she was not there and we were told that she had a governess. Thereafter I only saw her occasionally when she drove past on the road.

I think I must have recognized the Oszkarten carriage by some peculiarity in the noise it made, for an intuition told me beforehand, "Here she comes."

Then I hid myself behind the wild vine in our veranda, for nothing would have induced me to come out and greet her. Her red jacket, which she always wore when driving, once summer had begun, shone before me, and then something pierced me to the heart like a flash of devouring flame. And then I ran behind the brewery to the great pump the handle of which was always ready to help me to dream, and then I laughed and cried and was very happy.

I must tell you later on of Ottilie's early and tragic death.

CHAPTER III

A NEW LIFE

ONE day, when I was about eleven years old, my mother found me sitting crying in a corner, and discovered that Frau Hugenberger had determined, on account of my enormities (if I remember rightly, I had smeared a copy of a drawing with ink), to insert a special prayer for me for a whole week in her morning petition. She immediately said: "We can't go on any longer with that woman. She is going quite mad."

The very next morning we were told to stay at home, and she went off and entered us in the other and superior private school, although the school fees were considerably higher.

Henceforth I found myself in a new world, a world of regular habits, of order and discipline. Henceforth I was given my place in middle-class society, which proceeded to throw its net of commandments and decrees over my head forever.

Fräulein Hubert cared nothing for special prayers, or wringings of hands, or the court of punishment of a vengeful Deity, but she also cared nothing for flights into faeryland, for profligate and intoxicating feasts at the voluptuous tables of Imagination.

She was an energetic old maid with a voice like a brazen trumpet and eyes that commanded and kept order without the necessity of uttering a word.

There was no appeal against her punishments—not even an inner protest—for they were always just,

and if any were unusually severe, then Fräulein Julie emerged modestly from the background and eased things off with a joking remark. She was the elder sister, always ailing and always smiling. She taught English, for she had lived for a long time as a governess among our erstwhile cousins, and she also taught drawing. She had a large number of thick portfolios, which we were allowed to look at in the middle of the lesson, for, as she said, "The eye must first know what is beautiful before the hand draws a line."

There was one copy which excited my deepest imagination and which I was never tired of admiring until I was at last permitted to copy it. It represented the outjutting corner of a palace built on pillars, which was flanked by another palace, rich in pillars, in the background. My hands trembled with excitement when I was allowed to draw the pillars; a kind of divine frenzy came over me and this frenzy for pillars is still with me. You can imagine what Italy meant to me later on.

Fräulein Hubert taught us pretty much what the government allowed her to teach us, and that did not include Latin or mathematics. These subjects had to be acquired by special lessons and these were given by a handsome young pupil of the local finance office, whose knowledge was still glowing hot, for he had only just left school. He condescended to instruct me for three marks per month. I learned little and got a lot of hidings, and what I did learn roused in me a sensation of disgust which—at least as far as Latin was concerned—lasted as long as I had need of it.

But what was more important for my development than my lessons, which at least gave me an elementary grounding of definite learning, was my intercourse with my fellows. It is gospel truth that it is not our

teachers who educate us, but those with whom we are educated in common.

Who I was, *what* I was, what original characteristics I must confess to and which I must refuse to admit, I don't know, for my nature was a something which I took for granted. And consequently, as I saw it, everybody else must be like me at bottom. My mother says that I was a quiet, shy lad, easily elated and easily depressed, who wanted to "gang his ain gait."

That may be so. One thing is certain, that I was never beloved by my playmates. The girls, as a rule, got on with me, but without showing any warm interest in me, but the boys gave me the cold shoulder and bullied me whenever they could.

There were two boys who were associated with almost the whole of my youth, for I met them again at home, until I met them permanently in the upper second class. One was called Louis Damarau, the other Albin Dobinsky; and there was a third, whose name I cannot mention, as he later showed himself very kind to a nephew of mine. I will give him the pseudonym of Hallgarten, which is not in the least like his real name. These so-called school friends, with whom I sat hundreds of times, first of all on the same bench at school and later at the same beer table, were the first to saturate my sensitive soul with the corrosive poison of humiliation and bitterness, the first to give me the acrid draught of feeling that I was something inferior to the others, and to create in me a sense of being suppressed and bowed down, which in later life had a damaging effect on me in every attack which I made on my surroundings. To this I trace many a defect in my character, for which I had to suffer as if it were a curse, and the worst features of which, slackness and lack of courage, I only conquered as I grew older.

That I was shut out from their games and walks, that they went bathing without me, that they made secret appointments with the girls which I was not permitted to hear, soon became habitual, and it did not hurt me the less because it was continually repeated. But they had a more subtle way of torturing me.

The straitness of the family's means made it necessary for my mother to make the clothes which we boys wore and one pair of trousers which she made for me were too broad, I suppose. Now the sawyers wore broad breeches because, otherwise, the continual bending would cause an ordinary pair to split in the back. My friends immediately noticed this similarity, and wherever I went or stood the word "sawyer" resounded behind me. And it was useless for me to defend myself furiously and fall blindly on my tormentors with my fists. They were bigger and therefore stronger than I was, and so I always got a licking into the bargain.

I cannot remember that any insult in the whole of my life ever hurt so much or plunged me into deeper despair. Probably it was the fact that I read into it some reflection on the family poverty which made it so painful, for even if my enemies had no such intention, the intimate connection of the gibe with our poverty pierced me to the most sensitive center of my soul, for it cut more deeply than anything else could do into my own flesh and blood. Society in every small Prussian town or larger village which is not purely agricultural in character is severely divided into four layers, the social structure and prevailing customs of which determine with an iron hand the education and career of the individual born in any one of these spheres. It is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to climb from one layer to another, and, as a rule, no

ambition, no success, succeeds in bridging the gulf between one class and another.

The highest class is that of the "honoratorien," or gentry, which comprises those with a university education, landed proprietors, well-to-do business men, and a few others who, owing to their connections or by skillful maneuvering, have gained admission into the sacred circle. The second layer is composed of the middle class, which includes all those who are able to make some claim at least to a certain measure of education and respectability, such as the smaller officials, the landlords of the inns, most of the shopkeepers, and all those other people who do not feel themselves worthy to mix with the "upper class." Another gulf separates this class from the artisan class, the children of which are educated in the public schools and which finds its social amusement in rifle or gymnastic clubs. The fourth layer, that of the proletariat, the poor and the nameless, is not mentioned in good society and so I too will remain silent about it.

The fact that my family neither desired to belong to the first class, or gentry, nor was permitted to do so, but belonged to the middle class, was the greatest misery of my childhood. It was the source of my ambition, my obstinacy, my industry, and my efforts to reach the heights.

Had the choice been determined by my mother's wishes, we might probably have mixed in the higher society. We had friends in those circles and had been invited to do so, as she often mentioned with pride. But my father, whose Low German peasant blood always revolted when the question of mixing with his "superiors" was raised, refused bluntly. He said, "We have nothing to do with those people."

And so far as he was concerned, he was doubtless

right. He still wore his blue apron on brewing days; he often drove the brewery wagon out into the country, instead of his hired man (to have done so in the town would, of course, have been beneath his dignity); he was tongue-tied in the presence of educated people and found it necessary to excuse the game of *Préférence*, which he played every Saturday evening with the Catholic priest who lived behind us, with the words, "One need not reproach oneself for playing with such a man, for he, too, is of quite simple birth." Such a man had nothing to get from such society and he remained true to this opinion of his until he died.

To this must also be added his worries, the ever-abiding torturing worry which sometimes kept him up all night, walking up and down his room, groaning and wringing his hands. I have often wakened up to hear his wordless, but cursing moans, and my mother's voice trying to comfort him, though she herself was weeping.

No, in truth my *Frau Sorge* was not born of some idle poetic fancy.

Anyone who goes forth into life with such sounds in his ears and such pictures before his eyes has no use for foolish levity, and though every instinct in him bids him seek for joy, he will remain banished to the darker side of life until his fears and desires blend into a smile of resignation.

As soon as I had turned twelve the question of my future profession began to haunt me.

My friends had long since gone to the high school at Tilsit, which, of course, was closed to *me* because my father would never have been able to scrape the necessary money together to pay for my board. And yet, I could not get the idea that I must go to some

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high school, Realschule, or Gymnasium out of my head.

My mother probably saw the secret suffering with which I worried over the future, and often when I stared eagerly into vacancy, forgetting the book which I was supposed to be reading, she would steal up behind me, take my head in her arms, and whisper comfortingly to me, "Don't despair, my little lad; perhaps we shall be able to manage it."

Yes, but how? That remained a mystery for long, until one day a letter arrived from my "good aunt" at Elbing, in which she said she was willing to give me a trial. I could get my board and even piano lessons, which my cousin Marie was willing to give me twice a week, for the sum of four thalers a month.

My destiny was thus sealed, and the careers of forester and village schoolmaster, which as a desperate remedy had hitherto been painted to me in glowing colors as those which were the second best, vanished into the realm of forgotten nightmares. It was a secret letter from my mother, of which even my father knew nothing, that had brought this miracle to pass. My father could say nothing against it, especially as my mother said that she would find a quarter or even a half of the sum required from her milk money.

This "milk money" played a part in my life for twenty years, and whenever the knife seemed to be quite close to my throat it always came to save me at the last moment. The one cow which we possessed produced all that. The milk which remained over, after satisfying the needs of the family, might be sold, and the proceeds went into my mother's pocket.

How many sons in this world have been saved from sinking or even from destruction by just such "milk money"!

The "good aunt" at Elbing (her name was Frau Agnete Neufeldt) had always been a personage in our house. She lived on her dividends, she even possessed a fine house—or so we had heard—for which reason there was something of the faery about her, although any tangible evidence of this characteristic had so far not wandered in our direction. But now it had arrived and drew me forth to those faery lands in which prosperity and dignity, education and refinement, were at home.

The house was now filled with a feverish activity, for my outfit had to be so splendid that I could move in higher, nay, the highest, society without being looked down upon. I acquired two suits, made of the best cloth from Herr Hoffmann's shop and not made at home, either, as usual, oh no! but by a real tailor called Paetzel, who much later on, when I had to compete with the swells of the S. C., proved to be "an artist by the grace of God." I need not assure anyone who has ever met my mother that my linen was good enough for a trousseau. I even got two cravats to take with me, which she had stretched for me on small strips of cardboard, for the cravat which one ties oneself had not yet reached our social circle. One was of brown brocade for Sundays and feast days; the other—well I have forgotten what it was like, as one usually does forget everyday things.

I also had been afflicted with a mad desire—namely, to get into the third class. Damarau and Dobinsky had meanwhile got into the third, and I must not be behind them.

But my Latin and mathematics were weak. The young financial official had long since taken to drink and had given up the lessons. My French was moderate and my English did not help me, as one only began

to learn it in the third class. I knew nothing of natural science. History and geography did not count, and so I had only literature, but here I had collected a considerable treasure.

I even knew all of Schiller's plays and I had recently given my father a long dissertation on the contrast in the characters of Karl and Franz Moor, which was received in gloomy silence, for anything of which he knew nothing aroused his bitter dislike. Even to-day, I am not clear whether the reluctance with which he followed my later educational career was not due to some deep-seated grudge against his own destiny.

CHAPTER IV

THE "GOOD AUNT" AT ELBING

I LEFT home one sunny April morning under the care of Herr Hoffmann, the same Herr Hoffmann who had provided me with the two new suits and who was now on his way to the Leipzig fair to buy new supplies. We traveled to Tilsit with the post wagon, and from there by slow train.

Herr Hoffmann—blessed be his memory!—had had a large party two days before, and consequently his careful wife had given him a large packet with fine cream pastry—things of which one only had an idea in the home of the Sudermanns when mother had been out to one of the evening parties at the "Ressource." And the fact that I was allowed to help myself as often as I liked, and to eat more than my heart could desire, was for me a happy omen for the luxury of the time ahead of me. It was almost like a journey into the land of Cockaigne. All night I sat awake in my hard corner, and my imagination painted vividly the delights of the days to come. I was particularly happy about my uncle Heinrich.

Uncle Heinrich was my father's only real brother, and possessed an almost fabulous importance in my home. He had been the proprietor of the hotel, "The Golden Lion," which he had sold when his wife, a fat but extremely respectable woman, whose picture, with that of her husband, hung in our drawing-room and was often gazed at by our childish eyes, had been torn from him by death after a mysterious illness in which

everything she ate turned to sugar. We had never had any exact news as to what he had done since, but we understood that he was living with his relatives, of course as a wealthy and cheerful capitalist, ready, of course, too, to give his grateful nephew a share in the pleasures of his existence. Uncle Heinrich was to come and fetch me from the railroad station with his carriage. At least the "good aunt" had said so in her last letter, and as I climbed out of the train at five o'clock in the morning I looked around me with a beating heart for the carriage and its driver which were to wait for me; Uncle Heinrich, I thought, could not be far off from where they were.

But I could see nothing of the sort. There was only a rickety rattletrap standing behind the brilliant yellow post wagon, and on the rattletrap there crouched a seedy-looking character with long, greasy hair and a red nose, chewing a cigar. When he saw me looking about, not knowing what to do, he beckoned to me confidentially with his whip and called out:

"If you are Hermann, my lad, then come along. It is true that the horse has never run away in his life, but I was told not to leave him by himself."

I approached, bitterly disappointed. And when he stretched down two fat, moist lips toward me I climbed up on the boss of the wheel and kissed him, while a suspicious odor which I knew quite well from village inns, and from people I met by chance in the road, spread itself around and filled me with nausea.

This was my uncle Heinrich. When I had collected my box we drove straight through the sleeping town, and the curved windowpanes which I have never seen in such numbers in any other part of the world blazed in the morning sun. All this spoke of prosperity and happiness and wealth, but my heart was very heavy.

"Here is 'The Golden Lion,'" said my uncle, and pointed with his whip to a tall, bare house with little windows which stood pinched in between two similar old-fashioned gable buildings. His laugh was perfectly free from bitterness and was even almost gay. "Yes, yes, my lad, I once even owned that."

Then came the broad river Elbing, full of bulging barges and black steamers, and then a quarter of the town which was thickly covered with curious lofty white houses with black beams, a quarter of the town where there was not a soul to be seen, in which no curtain shone, and which appeared to be dead and buried. "That is the *Speicher Insel* (Warehouse Island)" my uncle explained to me. And then we suddenly came, as it were, into the country. Trees still bare edged the road on both sides; a village inn beckoned to us to stop with its open courtyard and taproom; fruit gardens were just about to burst into blossom; while we caught the scent of the fresh earth of a newly plowed field.

"Here we are," said my uncle, pointing to a fine, brightly painted villa the curved windows of which sparkled as brightly as those of all the fine houses which I had seen disappear behind me with envy. When I jumped down from the carriage my heart was quite light again, and then a little shriveled woman with long teeth and watery eyes came forward kindly to greet me, wiped her hard hand on a blue kitchen apron, and embraced me. A tall young girl with a brown pigtail, flashing eyes, and otherwise distinctly attractive gave me her lips to kiss. This was my cousin Marie. I was taken up to a gable room flooded with sunshine, in which, as I saw at the first glance, a piano was already awaiting my artistic efforts, and on

the table in front of the sofa stood a coffee pot and bread and butter. I was at home.

After two days which were crammed with the delights of new sights and fresh affection my aunt set out with me to enter me at the Realschule (high school). I had never ventured to dream of going to the Gymnasium. It was obviously impossible that I should be able to carry on my studies later, and if I had the leaving certificate from the Realschule it would suffice to enable me to obtain one of the higher positions in the post office or some similar profession. "The director will see you," said the porter.

In the middle of a room filled with a bluish haze there stood a tall fat man with a long red beard and flashing spectacles. This was Director Brunnemann, the omnipotent person who held my future destiny in his hands.

"What kind of a previous education have you had, my boy?" he asked.

"I have learned Latin, I have learned mathematics, I have learned the history of literature, and I have also learned two languages," I rattled off, in an attempt to get over my nervousness.

"Stop, stop!" he said, laughing. "Otherwise I shall not be able to offer you any position less than that of a teacher."

An examination, however, showed that I knew practically nothing but the first beginnings.

"Very good," said the director. "We will put you in the fourth class."

But I begged and pleaded: "Oh, but do give me a trial in the third class, please, sir. I will take so much trouble and work so hard."

My aunt also pleaded for me. "He comes from far back in the country," she said—"from Lithuania,

where the people are not so well educated, but he is an intelligent boy and will make good."

"Very well," said the director, "I will put you down for the third class, but you may be quite certain that you will be put back to the fourth class within a month."

The threat did not terrify me and I left the school building as cheerfully as possible. My cousin, the son of the "good aunt," a striking youth with the brilliant, coal-black eyes of a fanatic, who was attacking the world as an apprentice to an apothecary, mixed us up two alcoholic concoctions when we went to see him, first of all to enable us to drink to my great success, and secondly because he happened to be alone.

Fate, who turns love into hate and hate into love, what a terrible game you play with us! This cousin, who seemed to me for years the very pattern of all the virtues which a young man should possess, to whom I clung with deep reverence even when I became a student, later on wrote pamphlets against me and ran round to the editors of Berlin papers for years in order to denounce me as a traitor, a perjured wretch, a thief, and I don't know what else besides.

That same day I got to know the first real friend that life was to bring me. His name was Julius Blechschmidt, and his mother, with whom my aunt kept up a desultory acquaintance, was the widow of a higher official who eked out her miserable pension by needlework.

He was a wild lad, older but smaller than I was, with a black, smooth mane of hair and a beautiful pair of dark, flashing eyes. As he was now spending his second year in the third class he naturally became my mentor, and he managed this business so thoroughly

that there was no wild or foolish escapade in his and my class during the next two years in which I was not involved against my will and to my despair.

Two or three times I was nearly expelled, thanks to him, but his red-Indian-like nature always found some means of covering up our tracks. I cannot now tell you of our worst scrapes, for they were worse than criminal; they were disgusting.

But I loved him, loved him with the whole devotion of a boy who was lonely, easily discouraged, and treated hardly by life. What he thought, what he did, however much my innermost nature might rebel, was my pattern and unrealizable ideal. Perhaps I felt that he was much more closely in contact with the forces of nature than I, that untamed natural impulses played freely in him before which my nature was irresistibly obliged to yield. In spite of the smallness of his stature he was uncannily strong, a fine gymnast, a swimmer, a natural skater, and as much at home as a professional in everything that had to do with animals or in the vegetable kingdom. I will presently have to explain what and how much I have to thank him for.

Lessons began, and as the latest arrival I was given the lowest place in the class. It was soon evident that that was also my proper place so far as my knowledge was concerned. Our teacher was called Kutsch. He had previously been a teacher in a public school, and had only been permitted to take over the third class, owing to the old-established absence of formality, for Prussia had in those days not yet been turned into a machine by its regulations. He was a tall, stout man with sharp, commanding light-gray eyes, and a long beard at which he was perpetually tugging. He could be Jupiter Tonans, if he liked, and if he did not like,

he could be a pedant, shuffling about in goloshes, who filled the class book with punishments and kept his good nature in bounds, so that it came to light only during walks and in the playground. This man had impaled me on the horn of his sense of humor after the first foolish answer which I gave him in the geometry lesson, and if he asked me a question the class roared even before I had opened my mouth. This lasted until my German composition compelled him to pay me a grumbling respect, but that did not happen until much later.

It was still worse with Latin. When the first extemporary piece was given back, the best copy had no mistakes; the worst, however, had fifty-four. It was Claassen I who had no mistakes, and Sudermann who had fifty-four, being separated from the next worst by no less than thirty-one. Such a shocking result had never before happened in the third class, as the old Latin teacher, Herr Genrich (who remained a terror to me, all my life, so that I often dream of him even now) informed the class with shrieks of laughter.

So it was no wonder that one day the director came into the room during the mathematical lesson and without further parley said to me, "Sudermann, pack up your books; we are going to move you to the fourth class."

"No, no, no!" I screamed. "Herr Director, no, no, no!" And as he dragged me out of my seat with his left hand I fell on my knees and caught hold of the supports of the desk, sobbing and crying out, "I won't go! I won't go!"

The two big men looked at each other, smiling and stroking their long beards, and did not know what to do.

"I shall have to take him under my arm," said Kutsch, who was also our gymnastic teacher and possessed Herculean strength. But I clung even more desperately to the legs of my desk. They would have had to cut off my arms to tear me from it.

"Perhaps we could give him another chance," said the director.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "It is not much good," he replied.

"One never can tell," said the director, who was still standing by me, and at the same time I felt him gently stroke my hair. Then the two great men shook hands and said good-by, and I was saved.

Now, ye cymbals and trumpets, sound and clash, for I will sing a mighty song of young love.

It was not my cousin. After a few days of devoted attachment which the physical presence of a ripening young woman must necessarily bring with it, my feelings for her passed imperceptibly into the gentle affection which one feels for a sister, and never again went beyond it.

But it was another, far more beautiful, far finer, far more secret, a young cherub, a queen of the May.

When my mother was a young girl she was obliged, in order to relieve to some extent the poverty of her widowed mother, to seek her bread abroad, and had crossed the Haff to Elbing and entered Franz Hornig's toy shop as an apprentice. Friendly relations had developed out of this acquaintanceship, and these were carefully kept up, even after her marriage, by letters at the New Year and on her birthday, so that I received instructions from her to present myself to Frau Hornig as soon as possible after my arrival, and

give my mother's grateful greetings to her old friend, whose husband had meanwhile died.

When my cousin heard of my proposed visit which my shyness postponed from one Sunday to another, she nodded vigorously.

"You will be captured by Klara on the spot. It is true that she is still in the lower second class, although she is over fourteen."

My cousin had herself long since been promoted to adorn the first class. "But she is taller than I am, has already had dancing lessons, and is, generally speaking, very coquettish, very vain, and all the boys in the first class are running after her."

This description of her character did not succeed in frightening me away, even though I was still too young to have an idea that it was dictated by envy. I did not need to be caught first; I was already head over ears in love with her.

By day I avoided the street in which the Hornigs' house stood, although my way to school led through it. But when the dusk fell I crept gently past it, squinting sideways toward the window at which I thought my beloved one must be sitting. I had never seen her with my eyes. I did not *want* to see her, for I was afraid I should sink into the earth if I did so. My heart was already in a tumult whenever I even thought of it. But my mother began to press me. In every letter she wrote she asked me, "Why have you not yet been to see the Hornigs?" And in her last letter she had even written, "Do not write to me again until you can give me an account of your visit." I could not now postpone it any longer. And when the next Sunday afternoon came I gave my brocade cravat a rather more fashionable twist, revived my memory of the intellectual conversation which I con-

sidered suitable for my first entry into the great world and which I had long since had by heart (the relative merits of Karl and Franz Moor played a by no means inconspicuous rôle among them), and in God's name marched off to my execution.

But it all passed off splendidly. Old Frau Hornig received me with genuine joy. A pale, yellow, sickly girl, who did not like standing up because she was deformed, gazed at me with secret excitement, and I spouted like a waterfall without being obliged to make heavy claims on my literary knowledge.

As I say, everything passed off splendidly—only Klara happened to be on a picnic to Vogelsang, as a result of which my cousin gave me an extra pocket handkerchief when I went to bed. "You can cry into it until it is soaked," said this sympathetic soul. A fortnight later I received an invitation to the Sunday dinner. "Take care to eat a lot," said the "good aunt" to me as I set out, "so that you still have enough to be able to be without supper." And my cousin grinned. This time *She* was there. Tall, slender, with a brilliant smile, and eyes which were incredibly blue under broad, dark brows which made the blue of the eyes under the shadow of her big eyelashes seem still more incredible. There she stood in front of me, and gave me her hand—to me, an unworthy nothing, a stupid, crooked small boy who was at the bottom of the third class. She gave me her hand as though we were comrades—she, to me; she whom the boys in the first class ran after.

And when the others had greeted me she told me how sorry she was that she had not been at home on the previous occasion, and next time I must certainly come, too.

A flood of self-consciousness overpowered me. Yes,

if it were really true that I was not despised by her, not thrown aside as being childish and of no account, then I was already the master of the situation, and in the long run I could compete even with the boys in the first class. We sat down to table; one of her brothers, a young man with curly hair who looked like an artist, who immediately confided to me that he was going to make the business boom again, completed the party.

I was in the seventh heaven. I had never felt my spirit sway so lightly above the earth. And then as the soup was being ladled out I noticed that I had forgotten my pocket handkerchief.

It was all over—my hopes and my dreams vanished. My unaccustomed joy and happiness, my self-confidence, my flood of conversation were all ruined, overwhelmed by the painful question, "How can I get a pocket handkerchief?"

But everything has an end, and so even dinner went by. Dumb, awkward, stammering stupid answers, and only concerned with one thing, namely to conceal my sniffling, I let the minutes pass by, and squinted occasionally toward the door with the hopeless wish that I could take to flight. But when we wished one another "*Gesegnete Mahlzeit*" after many painful pauses and difficult conversational efforts, and we had reached the proper moment where I could turn with a discreet request to the son of the house, I could stand it no longer, told my kind host that I had something very urgent to do at home, and fled as though pursued by the Furies.

And so my rôle in the house of my beloved came to an end. I never dared to cross its threshold again, and never again did I receive an invitation. But I still preserved in my heart, hopelessly and obstinately,

my love for the most beautiful and lovely girl on earth all through the period which followed.

When I walked home at night from Blechschmidt's I used to stand for hours in front of her door, but when I saw her coming toward me on the street I turned round or ran over to the other side, and when I could not help meeting her and her smiling glance greeted me, I always had the feeling as if I had gone blind and was going to sink into the earth, so that it seemed a miracle to me afterward that I was able to pass her more or less properly. And my shame, which was thus stirred up again, raged in me for days afterward.

This went on for more than two years, but I will not anticipate.

I got on fairly well in school. There was no more talk about putting me into a lower class. My teachers tolerated me, and when we got a fresh order of places as the result of our work, I usually went up a few places. I continued, however, to be very bad at Latin, and when Herr Genrich asked me a question I only needed to look at his satirical eyes to be bereft of speech. On the other hand, the natural sciences flourished all the better. It was now summer, and we had botany, while zoölogy was to follow in the winter. I also looked ahead presumptuously to physics and chemistry, the most longed-for subjects of my greed for knowledge, as the faithful believer longs for the gate of Paradise. Botany left me unscathed; it turned my life into one great festival. It gave me the first joy of wandering with my friends, and led me gently by the hand into the forecourts, into the temple, and finally into the sanctuary of our great mother.

I have endeavored to describe the natural beauties of my Lithuanian home to some extent. They have a typically northern character, and the features of the

Sarmatian Plain are already to be seen in their heaths and moors. But here, in the neighborhood of Elbing, the full beauty of the German marshland and the loveliness of German foliage revealed their wonders to me for the first time. The town, which lies halfway between the higher ground and valley, offers a wealth and variety of nature pictures in its surrounding, such as scarcely any other of our native land is able to offer, while the Haff, the sea, and its sand dunes can be reached in a few hours.

It is true that, without a guide and without the eagerness to learn, nothing is revealed to the eye even here. But I had plenty of guides among my friends, and my longing to learn, once it was awakened, speedily became a passion with me. On Saturdays I gobbled down my dinner and went off with Blechschmidt and other friends to the woods which cover the higher ground for many a mile behind Vogelsang, a favorite place for excursions. Then I felt in my breast a spark of enthusiasm of the old conquistadors who steered their barks off into the unknown to conquer the world and its treasures. What I brought home was usually only a botanist's case full of half-withered weeds, but pearls of new knowledge glimmered under the drooping blossoms. An unwritten code of honor demanded that we should know by heart the Latin names and species of every plant we found, its classification according to Linnæus and its family according to the "natural" system very much more exactly than it was demanded of us at school, and we always had to be quite familiar with its relative species and distinguishing marks as well as with the question of where it was to be found and in what area. Anyone who did not know these things was accounted vulgar and excluded from important conversations.

Consequently, I could not help increasing my knowledge extraordinarily fast. And although when I arrived I could not have told the difference between a crow's-foot and a marsh marigold, I soon was initiated into the inner circle.

We made great voyages of discovery in order to find some rare and mysterious specimens, and came home either in glorious triumph or bitterly humiliated. One particular flower, the famous *Linnæa borealis*, and various orchids, especially that wonderful flower *Cypripedium calceolus*, were eagerly sought for, were the objects of our longing which filled our dreams, and were the prizes of many an expedition.

The man who inspired this blazing enthusiasm which swiftly spread to me from the hearts of my companions must not be forgotten. He was one of my teachers and was called Doctor Nagel. In later years, when he had become a director, he wrote to me on the occasion of some jubilee festivity, and I did not even thank him in my answer. But important as this hunting for plants may appear, it was really only the seed from which my devoted love of nature was grown. My brain was filled with thitherto unknown ecstasy when the stillness of evening unfolded the dome of leaves with its dark wings and the sinking sun flooded with flaming light the saffron-yellow hills, and the rosy haze covered the towers of the distant town, and the waters of the river were like mother of pearl which slowly faded into gray.

I did not know whence this ecstasy came or by what it was nourished, but it was there, and melted everything that I had ever felt or thought in its clairvoyant fire to a seething mixture of freedom from the world, or joy of life, and devotion to God. The same impulse toward piety which had taken me as a

child to the altar and then had sunk under the distress of circumstances and the cold light of common day, revived once more, and expressed itself in silent hymns of praise to Nature who brought me daily such new miracles.

Not always silent, however. I had my German composition, which had to be written every four weeks, and there I could include much of the copious stores which made my heart and brain tremble. And when I got my book back from Herr Kutsch he usually gave me a surprised look accompanied by a gentle shaking of the head or reluctant praise, but I never got a better remark than, "Good on the whole," or, "Satisfactory."

And then, of course, my friend Blechschmidt took care that I should never become a model boy. There was some form of mischief nearly every day in which I was obliged to take part unless I wished to be excluded forever from the circle of heroes. For me, heroes they were and remained, he and his friend Christoph, the freckled giant who was rumored to be already a ladies' man, and four or five others who maintained a reign of terror in the class and were the ringleaders in every escapade.

Who was it who broke the street lamps on the *Speicher Insel* fifty years ago? Who has the cat murder on the Junkerstrasse on his conscience? Who was it who broke into the Kasino garden one night and took the garlands, which were provided for the summer festival the next day, to adorn the bathing place where we used to go swimming? Oh, my dear citizens of Elbing, I could reveal secrets to you which would make your eyes open. But I should be boasting if I were to maintain that I really enjoyed these scrapes. My heart always beat too fast, and it was

far too difficult to get out and to return secretly to give me any comfort in playing robber, or even at being the captain of the band. And if it had not been for my uncle Heinrich, who concealed many a crime, the "good aunt" would probably have soon turned me out.

Oh yes, Uncle Heinrich! That is a sad chapter. The "good aunt" said daily: "One can do nothing more with the man. He is lazy, and drinks, and allows himself to be kept by his generous relatives, although life is anyhow so expensive."

At that time Uncle Heinrich slept in the cellar on a straw mattress and covered himself with his overcoat. My aunt and cousin did not like letting him come into the house, for even if he had not been drinking he brought with him an extraordinary odor, the smell of people who do not take off their clothes at night. He was usually out by day, "looking for a job," as he said, but it seldom came to anything. When he returned in the evening his speech was thick and his eyes were glassy and moist, but he had also lost one more hope. This was the regular recurring condition which defined the results of his efforts.

In spite of this increasing poverty he was a very cheery old chap who was quite happy in his cellar lair. One must not imagine that his dwelling could be compared with a human habitation. It was a room with brick walls, and an arch brick roof, the floor of which often was under water during the autumn and spring. Uncle Heinrich then raised his bed, which he did by laying various layers of bricks under an old door and dragging his straw closer together. He called this "moving into his 'upper story.'" The first time that I found him like this I was greatly moved and my eyes filled with tears, but he comforted me.

"I float here like the spirit of God over the waters," said he, "and so long as I don't get rheumatism I am as well off as if I were in heaven. Anyhow, don't ask your aunt for anything, and above all things don't write to your father about it. He can't help me, and it will only give him unnecessary worry."

As he was thoroughly well acquainted with the hotel business, owing to his previous position as proprietor of "The Golden Lion," he often busied himself in the neighboring inns by feeding the horses of the carters coming into the town, and having a drink with their owners, most of whom had been his friends at school. I assume that he also drew his income from them, and this he again laid out in drink.

As will be seen it was not possible to make much out of my uncle and I cannot do much to beautify him even to-day, no matter how much trouble I take to do so. But at the same time he was a true philosopher who drew his lesson from each event, and acted accordingly. When he was sitting on the cellar steps in the warm sunshine, of which he certainly had need in consideration of his many damp nights, and I kept him company, he often broke out into edifying meditations.

"What have I got to complain of?" he said once. "Your aunt has sent me down coffee, and bread with lard." The two cigars which I still have over from yesterday are, it is true, a little bit broken, but they will taste good all the same, and the beautiful sunshine will look after all the rest. Tell me anybody who can boast that he is better off."

If there was anything in the world which troubled him it was the memory of the prosperity which he had once enjoyed, and the circumstances to which he had owed it.

"I will tell you one thing, my lad," he said once, "never marry a rich woman. If you are going to work for wages, take a job as farm hand or bootblack, but not as a husband." And on another occasion he said: "You grow up and think that you are a man. Thank you! You are just a little lap dog with a golden collar from which a watch is hung, and if you are naughty your pocket money is stopped. And if you take one too many in despair, you have to sleep on the sofa, where you cannot even stretch your legs properly. I would much rather sleep in the water or even in my coffin than spend one more night on that sofa."

"But I don't want to say anything against her," he continued, looking round anxiously, as if the shade of the woman whom he had accused to me were by some chance standing behind him in the entrance to the cellar. "Taking her all in all, she was a good woman, and a pretty woman, and a fat woman, and always very affectionate, but particularly when I did not happen to feel affectionate myself."

Then he would shudder quietly as he may often have done when it was his duty to be affectionate and he did not feel like it.

He never expressed himself about my aunt. Only once he said, "If I eat a person's bread, I have to sing his praises, but if the bread is given grudgingly, then I, too, grudge my praises."

My aunt, on the other hand, was a great deal more eloquent when she happened to talk about him, which she did, as I have already hinted, morning, noon, and night.

"We ought to send him off to America," she said one day; "otherwise I shall always have him on my back. I do wish his other relatives would help to pay for his journey. I am not thinking of your father, dear

Hermann, for, anyhow, he has nothing, but your uncle Jacob, and your aunt from Robach, and your aunt Annchen, they could all pay, if they liked."

And then she would begin a long series of bitter complaints about the hard-heartedness of our relatives and proved to herself that she was the only one who had been blessed by heaven with a kind heart.

"That is why everybody takes me for a fool," she continued; "for example, the money I get for your board isn't nearly enough, even if I add in the thaler which we get for your piano lessons, for you have a hearty appetite, my lad. Marie is quite ready to give you your lessons for nothing, for she has inherited my kindness of heart, just as her brother has done." These piano lessons were in a class apart. They had never properly begun, and the only sign of them was that by degrees I was able to play the song, "Kommt ein Vogel geflogen" ("A Bird Came to Me Flying"), with my first and second finger absolutely accurately, instead of the five-finger exercises which had been so strongly recommended to me. I might begin anything else, but it always turned into this song.

My cousin said, with regard to her own efforts, that she was perfectly able to make up for any lack of technique which she still possessed, by the depth of her emotions. And she was probably right, for "The Maiden's Prayer," in the execution of which she excelled, it is true, seldom reached the end, but such portions as I was permitted to hear always filled me with emotion and secret longing. A still more beautiful piece was another, called "Les Cloches du Monastere," in which the sound of the bells ringing the Angelus was imitated in the most moving fashion. It also impressed me so much because it was described on the title-page as a "drawing-room piece." It always

brought before my eyes a room with golden furniture in which beautiful women and elegantly dressed gentlemen listened to the tune with deep emotion, and, therefore, it was also really too moving for me.

The relations between myself and my aunt and my cousin were on the whole quite friendly. Both of them were to me something like higher beings, full of the virtues of the strictest righteousness and impeachable nobility. Not even my sympathy for Uncle Heinrich had the faintest effects on these feelings, for I heard every day that he really did not deserve so much generosity, and that anybody else who had not so good and simple a heart would have sent him packing long ago.

For other people! When the dusk gradually came on and my aunt was peeling an apple saved from the year before, she gave the most hair-raising examples of the deceitfulness and hard-heartedness of our fellow creatures, and also terrible examples of the general extravagance, loss of property, and destruction which inevitably follows as God's punishment. Yes, the world was very wicked. There were people living in the "Pangritz-Kolonie," a poor quarter in front of the town, who did not pay her their rents, out of sheer wickedness, and to whom one was being far too kind when one simply turned them out. The family who lived on the floor below us had, it is true, never been behindhand with their rent, but the facts that the woman was dressed in silk and satin, and that the man lent money to the most unsafe people at four per cent, would be sure to bring vengeance in their train. And anybody with any prophetic instinct could already see quite plainly that the day would come when they would leave the house in shame and misery. And my cousin clenched her hard little fists while her

eyes blazed as if she could hardly wait for this hour of triumph to strike.

When my cousin came to visit us he also brought with him an overflowing measure of bitterness, but the sweets which he brought with him in his pocket did much to make the atmosphere more bearable. There were cough lozenges and chemical concoctions, and drops for the stomach, and candied ginger, and a kind of effervescent powder which had the most heavenly taste of apples. His greatest specialty, however, was the mixing of fruit syrups, and this art, which was to make him famous, ended later in ruining him. The gifts which he brought us, which were really secret purloinings, always meant a feast day for us, for we should never have got such luxuries in any other way.

I cannot praise my "good aunt's" economy too highly. It was not an accomplishment or the reward of effort or some self-denial which had been acquired with pain and grief. On the contrary, it was simply and convincingly natural, and it even convinced me.

The fact that I gave up coffee in the morning, and used the money given me for the rolls which went with it to buy theater tickets with, was, after all, my own fault, and if my aunt could not always manage to satisfy the hunger of my starving stomach at one o'clock, that was my fault, and not hers.

Besides, there were usually some cold potatoes somewhere in the kitchen which I could attack with impunity under the excuse that I had to wash myself thoroughly, and had, therefore, bolted the door. The worst that could happen was that we had to skip the evening meal later on, because the necessary material for the fried potatoes which were to go with it had vanished in some mysterious fashion. My "good

aunt" was a past mistress in "skipping" meals. She was never tired of pointing out the advantages which the combination of tea and supper had for the health of a human being. She said that cold coffee made one beautiful, and that hot coffee with a good slice of white bread with it was perfectly able to replace a supper with five courses. And so far as being hungry was concerned, my "good aunt" was assuredly right when she said it was absolutely impossible to satisfy a growing boy of thirteen. I comforted myself with this reflection, and flourished exceedingly, none the less, so that it cannot have been so bad.

CHAPTER V

WHAT THE SUMMER BROUGHT ME BESIDES

IT brought war, that great and glorious war as a result of which we are now perishing.

It was a hot July day, and our Herr Kutsch was wearing his Panama hat, which he only touched with his fingers in acknowledging our salutes, so as to save the rim, as he said—no, as a matter of fact he was not wearing it that day, but was carrying it attached to his buttonhole, and rubbed his hands continuously over his forehead, which went back right to his neck.

"My lads, do you know what has happened?" he called to us as we pushed forward past him into the playground, greeting him shyly.

No. How should we know? We had lain until late in the evening in the water, and what was meanwhile happening on the dry land had little interest for us.

"Napoleon has declared war on Prussia."

"Hurrah!" we cried, and I am sure there was nobody among us who did not in the same moment say to himself, "What a pity I am not three years older."

The playground swarmed like an ant heap, although we ought to have been in our classrooms long before. Our masters collected us, their charges, around them, and made stirring speeches to us. Herr Kutsch, too, collected a group around him, to whom he explained the situation, and it was thus that I learned the history

of the offer of the Spanish crown and the impertinence of Benedetti.

The director, with perspiration shining on his bald head, stood in a corner with the boys of his first class. It was obvious that something special was happening there, because he turned first to one, and then to another, and shook both their hands; one he even embraced.

"They are off to the front," whispered Claassen I, who stood next to me. Our group broke up and pressed round the lucky fellows. "They are off to the front! They are off to the front!" And then the director said, "Come, my dear children, all of you; we will go into the great hall and pray."

It is true that we did that every morning as soon as the school bell rang. But to-day no bell sounded. There was also no pushing and crowding. We walked quietly behind our masters, and many who were friends held hands, which was usually frowned down upon as being the signs of a milksop. The hymn was "Praise the Lord." And then, when the last note had sounded, it was the director himself who said the morning prayer. He spoke of Prussia's might and Prussia's sense of duty, and that now all the other German races would group themselves round Prussia, as chickens gather to the mother hen.

"We shall now show the world," he said, "that the longing which has governed our life has been no illusion and that there is still a Germany worthy of its name, worthy of its past, worthy of the destiny which rules over it."

The history of the year 1870 justified his words, but is that equally true of 1922?

The first victories, those of Woerth and Spichern, were celebrated at school. But then came our summer

holidays, when we no longer heard in them the clatter of the whole world machine, even including the war, for these were minor matters.

It was on a sunny morning in early August that I crossed on the second ferry, belonging to the village of Ellerwald, to the Nogate Damme. The property of my uncle Jacob, on which I was to spend the next weeks of my holidays, was not far distant from the ferry.

My uncle Jacob was the eldest child of my father's family, and his farm meant to us no less than the ancestral halls of a knightly clan meant to their far-distant descendants.

It is no empty imagination if one is proud of belonging to a peasant stem. There is, of course, as little reason to be conceited about it as if one were born on the steps of a throne, but it is always something to know that one has somewhere a firm root in mother earth, like that of the vine which lives under the protection of the same thatched roof which has been to so many generations a refuge and home.

Although the farm on which my father first saw the light of day had long passed into the hands of strangers, the will-o'-the-wisp family feeling which exists somehow among the members of the same blood stock who have been widely separated still continued, and so my father had taught me from my infancy to regard the property of my uncle Jacob as a kind of primeval family home.

I can still see plainly before me the gabled house, painted red-brown, the threshold of which I found at last after hours of wandering. In accordance with the Low German custom, everything was housed under the same roof, including the stable and barn, the latter

on the right-hand corner. In front there was a flower garden in the Dutch fashion which extended to the rear into luxurious orchards.

The courtyard, like every typical farmer's courtyard, green with grass, with the usual manure heap and horse capstan, with a barn which rounded off the farther side of the square, a wicket gate shutting it off from the street, a herd of swine which trotted forward to meet me, geese, ducks, hens, pigeons everywhere, and the whole wrapped in a red midday haze which welcomed me in kindly fashion to its midst. It was thus that the Eden of those days appeared before me.

What now followed was a great festival of laziness and gluttony. I scraped the edges of the ditches with a rack, I climbed the fruit trees, I sat on the harvest wagons, I raced about on unsaddled horses. It was a period of joy, of pranks, of dreaming, and of the sadness which happiness brings.

I had a cousin, some years older than I, who was reckoned to be a kind of crown-prince, and who, my "good aunt" declared, had gambled away the results of the last crop of rape seed in the village beer house. I never asked if that were true or not, but the extreme probability that he had done such a desperate deed surrounded him in my eyes with the glory of being a man of the world, and reduced me to being completely his faithful subject. He was allowed to eat a large piece of cheese thickly covered with butter with his morning coffee, instead of bread, and my uncle laughed sheepishly, and perhaps rather proudly, when he saw him do so.

Uncle Jacob was a little, stocky man with a beak like an eagle and a jutting chin. He had no beard, and his hair was already snow white. His neighbors said

of him that he was as hard as iron, and that is probably true. But I only experienced love and good will from him, together with a little sympathy. I was the son of that brother who was unfortunate, and, therefore, obliged to occupy myself with arts which brought in no money, such as study, etc. There were also my aunt and two girl cousins. My aunt was beginning to feel her age, and lived in a comfortable drowsiness out of which she could only be stirred when it became a question of hospitality. The girls were unattractive, shy, and gave no signs of femininity, as I already felt instinctively, although I was but thirteen.

All the same, the poor things longed for life and the happiness of youth with all their hearts. It is a matter of course that they were not allowed to dance. That would have been a deadly sin which Heaven would never have pardoned. But even the wearing of white blouses was strictly forbidden them by their father, who regarded it as a temptation of the flesh.

The neighbor's daughter, who was called Warkentin, and was also a Mennonite, was even allowed to play the piano. Often on a quiet evening sounds were wafted over to us which, it is true, were more like the rattle of a mill than those of a stringed instrument. But she, too, was not allowed to wear white blouses. Many a secret tear was shed over this tragedy. And I, the strange cousin, was the recipient of many confessions which came suspiciously near to being a revolt against the Fifth Commandment. But my uncle Jacob knew what his duty toward his God and to himself was, and nobody ever dared to disobey this and many another of his prohibitions. Being a preacher and the eldest member of the Mennonite community, he was obliged to live a model life, and this duty extended, of course, to his household.

The "Elder Community," as it was called, was so strict that it looked down upon the "New Community," which consisted principally of people living in the town, because it possessed a pastor who had studied at the university. It considered it sinful to permit the product of an alien science to come between them and their Lord God. If I remember rightly—but I may be wrong—even the playing of the organ was looked at askance. The simplicity of the ordinary Protestant service was gorgeously pompous compared with the religious ceremonies of the sect of my forefathers. The community had two chapels, one in Elbing, the other in the country, in which services were held alternately.

The "good aunt" insisted that I, although I had been baptized as a Protestant, should never stay at home when she herself went to chapel, and the tight black gloves without which I was never permitted to come into the presence of my God caused me to suffer tortures during the winter, which are inextricably involved in my memory with the Mennonite religion.

The chapel was a whitewashed hall full of pews. At one end there was a wooden balustrade which ran from one wall to the other, behind it a long seat divided in the middle by a hexagonal pulpit. You must further imagine that on this seat sat about twelve silver-haired old gentlemen, half of whom, at least, were more or less closely related to me, and you will easily believe that a bird of passage like myself was unable to resist a glow of warm feeling of belonging to the community, however much he might also know that he was in a cage.

I heard my uncle Jacob preach three times—once during those holidays in the chapel in the country, and twice later on in the town. He always used High German and with the same difficulty, and I, like a

little wretch, must, of course, first of all notice all the grammatical mistakes. His sermons were full of old-fashioned expressions which had been copied out of volumes of sermons of the seventeenth century, and they were adorned with commonplaces which might have been drawn from any old calendar. But he sometimes was also filled with a gloomy devotion which I should never have suspected from the unemotional character of so experienced and hard-headed a man. I do not know whether this devotion burned in the depths of his soul, or whether it had descended to him as a heritage from the times of the persecution of his sect, but it made me feel more closely attached to him, and I was proud to have his blood in my veins.

At the end of the month I left the farm, in accordance with my father's wish, to spend the rest of my holidays with an aunt who possessed an inn on the other side of the Nogate in the village of Robach. Aunt Lischen was the one I liked best of all my father's relatives. The hardness and the avarice which all of them seemed to possess had been toned down in her to such an extent that I could class her as belonging to the ranks of ordinary humanity. When I saw her again, seventeen years later, at my father's funeral, she scarcely seemed strange to me.

I sat for hours and hours in her taproom, and listened greedily to the conversation of the bargees and country people who had turned in there for a cordial or a glass of brown beer. There was an unending series of pictures spread out before me, and I lived a thousand lives while one guest after the other brought me the history of his destiny with open hands.

There was not much talk about the war. The news in the paper was spoken of briefly and then put on

one side. The mighty events which were occurring had not yet penetrated to the brains of these men, and if one or other of them had a son or brother "at the front" he spoke of him as if he had gone on a journey somewhere and would soon come back. I never heard anybody mourn his losses.

But one day there was a certain amount of excitement. A rumor started at Marienburg had spread along the banks of the Nogate, and reached Robach about four o'clock in the afternoon. It was to the effect that Napoleon had been captured, and with him all his army. The bargees had not yet heard of it, but they moved slowly along the sluggish stream. It was the market people who brought the good news from one inn to another. There was great fraternization between the people sitting at the various tables. But I went off into the remotest corner of the orchard and cried my heart out, so happy I was.

CHAPTER VI

A MIDSUMMER MADNESS

I SHALL not tell you at once what form my next midsummer madness took.

To begin with, I came back from my aunt as fat as a fatted ox and as wise as possible.

We began the winter term, for the holidays which we usually had at Michaelmas had been combined with our summer holidays, and although it seemed a mockery to reckon those hot September days to autumn, autumn soon told us that it was there.

The hills and valleys were soon covered with red, and as soon as we began to make an excursion into the forest, evening had got us by the throat and it was cold enough to make a camp fire seem pleasant, if not absolutely necessary. Well, then we lit a fire and crouched round the crackling brushwood, chewing stolen potatoes which we roasted in the glowing embers. As the darkness deepened, the more mysterious seemed the yellow-red glow of the fire and the more attractive. We began to think of the *Last of the Mohicans* and Uncas and Chingachgook became living personages. We posted sentinels so that the wicked "palefaces" should not disturb our happiness, while the pipe of peace went round from hand to hand, bravely stopped with string and withered chestnut leaves. We often went as far as to adventure on firewater.

But the one thing lacking was a proper prairie fire, and we did not know how to start one, as the earth and

meadows were moist and green and even the potato stalks were not yet withered enough to burn. Finally we decided that a burning forest would fill the bill and that all we had to do was to spread the bundle of brushwood a little and leave the rest to Providence.

And so two or three of us undertook the job with reluctance (I was, of course, one of them, for I was famous for my lack of courage), but in the long run we were also drawn into the noble scheme.

We met with no difficulties. Wherever we threw down a glowing torch an answering flame leaped up to meet it and we were soon surrounded by the appropriate "sea of flame."

I don't know who it was among us who first got scared (I, of course, had been scared all the time), but it was probably Blechschmidt, the original instigator of the game, who from his knowledge of nature was best in the position to weigh up the damage. Well, be that as it may, at a given moment we all dashed down, panic-stricken, to the brook which flowed peacefully at the bottom of the gully, and filled up our botany cases with water. Those had, however, not been constructed to be water-tight, and the result was that when they came to the scene of the conflagration they were empty, but our coats and breeches were dripping wet.

Well, there we stood helpless before what looked to be a catastrophe, and which might have had tragic consequences, for the lower branches were beginning to burn fiercely, when suddenly there appeared the aforesaid much-feared "palefaces," in the shape of five or six lusty woodmen, to save the situation.

They didn't worry about water. Quickly they cut down branches about as long as themselves from the trees, and beat these violently on the fire until each flame was speedily reduced to a glowing ember.

In our terror, no one of us had thought of the first law of self-preservation, namely, that of taking to immediate flight, besides, one of the men had got hold of two of my companions by the seats of their breeches, and one of them was Blechschmidt. Well, we others could not seek safety in flight, for it was impossible to leave the captives in pawn. The horrible "pale-faces" threatened us with the police and with a beating, and we stood in a circle around them, crying and pleading. But they remained merciless until a boy who still had his October pocket money intact got the idea of trying to buy them off. Then they weakened. Each of us hunted out a few pfennigs, but even that was not enough, and it was not until I produced the only valuable that I possessed, namely, my silver watch, that they began to laugh and say, "Hold, enough."

Everyone will readily imagine how quickly we ran off, for each of us had vividly before him the horrible picture of a policeman's notebook with his name written large in it. We went home in silence, but we never thought again of starting a cheery forest fire.

Autumn came on and our victories increased in number. The capitulation of Metz followed the battle of Orléans, while the ring round Paris drew closer. At intervals the flags fluttered on the gables of the old Hansa houses, and there were illuminations in the evening.

Then came the winter frost—that pitiless cold the memory of which has been preserved for future generations by the historians of the war. It is true that we have since passed through much worse times than that. We have looked up at the moon through four long winters and thought to ourselves, "Our lads

are lying in the open in the snowy fastnesses of the Carpathians or on the frozen swamps of the Pripyat, and there is no relief for them." And there is no one to relieve us from the misery which their victories brought us.

In those days the sound of bells was always in the air, and our hearts were full of enthusiasm and thoughts of imperishable glory and a greatness that would last forever. The word "Prussia" disappeared from people's lips and from the printed page, and a new word came up in its place, spoken first of all shyly and hesitatingly as one speaks of a secret hope, and then later on earnestly, overmasteringly, in a tone which stopped every smile.

The new word was "Germany." In it lay a warning to the world, a fierce demand and will power. When it was spoken the speaker's eye flashed, his bosom swelled, and the imagination reached forward to the opening doors of Paradise.

And so we came to the 18th of January, and the great events which happened in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles were only a matter of course which *had* to come. They were the payment of the debt which we were entitled to demand from our world destiny.

As I walked over the gloomy *Speicher Insel* during the evening to see the illuminations in the town, the heavens themselves had been lightened up to celebrate the occasion. The Aurora Borealis blazed high above the earth in violet arches hung with rosy stalactites and supported on rows of blood-red pillars which dissolved into flame and from flame arose again.

Well, and what is the use of it all? To-day we cannot answer the question, nor can we see the use of it yet. In those days it was, it is true, easy to see in it a symbol. God himself had spoken. But to-day we

have condemned Him to silence, and He will show us no sign until the God within us compels Him to do so.

I am very glad that I was permitted to live through those years in full consciousness, for from them I have learned to find some means of measuring the enormous exertions and sufferings which were recently imposed on us. Compared with these, everything which happened then seems childish. Our ordinary civilian life went its wonted way. There was no lack of man power and there were no signs anywhere of any shortage of food; also the dance had scarcely begun before it ended.

There was an interval of only ten days between the great scene at Versailles and the conclusion of the armistice, and the conditions of peace took scarcely a month to settle. It is true we did not need so much time as the Allies have required on the World War, for we had no intention of driving the people whom we had conquered toward destruction by countless stripes with the rod of cruelty. And I should like to bet—I, unfortunately, do not know with whom—that whether it be decades or centuries hence, if France again lies prostrate before us, we shall not be less generous than we were in those happier days.

Happier days, but no holiday, for, although the hymns of thanksgiving and the solemn exhortations which the occasion demanded followed one another, our work suffered no interruption. On the contrary, we were worked as hard as if Class 3B had to build up a large portion of the new realm.

We were well aware that the world was watching us. Class 3B was not a kind of lower Class 3 which looked up longingly to Class 3A as something higher. Both

were on the same level and were regarded as equals, vying with each other, and from both it was possible to attain direct to the high dignity of the lower second class. But it was usual in both to spend two years in the class, and it was only in exceptional cases that this period could be reduced to one year.

It was quite obvious that I, who had begun as the worst in the class, and who had only been permitted to stay there as a matter of grace and compassion, would never be allowed to make such an enormous jump. I had also never dared to hope for such a thing. And if I now said I had been seized by the wild ambition to make a bold jump over the second year I turned giddy. And then again the thought came up that the idea that such a thing could perhaps happen seemed to be not so mad, after all.

I do not remember any longer when and how it was impressed on me. In any case, it did not arise from myself. The sense of my own unworthiness, which was deeply implanted in me, would never have permitted that. It is probable that my friend Blechschmidt, whose second year was rapidly coming to a close, expressed the wish in some fit of lazy enthusiasm that we could still be together later on, and as a person must have something to dream about, my imagination had probably seized on this idea which thenceforward never left me. As soon as I closed my eyes in bed or if the moon did not let me sleep, or when the fresh light of daylight hunted me from my pillows, the idea was always there. However, it disappeared immediately at the moment when the possibility of its realization ought to have shown itself.

I only needed to look through my exercise books, in which the word "Unsatisfactory" still continued to appear, to realize that it was nothing better than a

form of insanity, and just because it was so it had to be suppressed by force. There were plenty of means of doing so—novel reading, pasting flowers in my herbarium, chess, and, above all, skating. I did not, of course, go to the great and respectable rink which charged for entry and on which the *jeunesse dorée* of the town practiced their enticing arts. I might, it is true, have saved enough from my breakfast rolls to buy a ticket. No, that was not the reason, but it was there that Klara Hornig was skating every afternoon, and to appear before her eyes before I could skate as well as the experts would have caused me unutterable shame. But there was place in corners where I could skate. Curves forward, curves backward, figures of 3 and many other things. I practiced for hours, for whole evenings, till heaven and earth had dissolved in fiery mist, till my legs trembled with hunger and I could scarcely manage to scramble home.

Then, sometimes after a thaw, the whole world became one vast rink, and then my friend Blechschmidt resumed his rights as the leader of our band and we pushed out downstream as far as the Haff, or upstream as far as the Drausen See, in which the river Elbing has its source. We pushed on for mile after mile, and anyone who showed that he was tired was accounted a milksop.

I remember one Sunday morning, toward the beginning of spring, a misty morning after a slight frost during the night that Blechschmidt and I skated out over thin ice to the Drausen See. Everything went splendidly as long as we had the river beneath us. The new ice lay smooth on the top of the old sheet, and cracks and dangerous spots were carefully avoided. Further, if one broke through one could always scramble out.

But when the canebrake of the lake began to rise around us matters looked different. The water was rising in little springs between the stalks, and what seemed to be a sheet of ice in front of us was seen to be, at closer quarters, water which was just covered by a thin sheet of ice. The only part of this sheet which was firm was the sleigh track which ran like a white ribbon straight over the lake, the surface of which had become tough and firm, owing to the traffic which it had endured for months. It went longitudinally under our stooping bodies, and if the point of a skate came an inch too far over the edge of the track either to the right or to the left, it cut through the ice. My heart had been beating fast for quite a long time, and suddenly I realized that I had a third companion, namely, Death.

"Turn back!" I cried to Blechschmidt, who went ahead of me in silence.

"It can't be done," he called back. "If we stop we shall go through."

And when I begged him again he called out, quite hoarsely, "Keep time; otherwise the ice will break."

And so we kept on on a swaying track about as broad as a table, while to right and left, as far as one could see, water and ice gurgled and groaned in their uncanny play.

I thought of my mother, I thought of my father, and what the "good aunt" would probably say if I never came home again; and I also thought of Klara Hornig.

"Stop," said Blechschmidt suddenly. "We are across."

The reeds of the bank on the other side lay behind us, although I had not noticed it, and before us there was a white-flecked field to which the road ascended

with black sods. There was no village to be seen; only a few isolated farmhouses in the misty distance.

"Very well. We must go back," said Blechschmidt between his clenched teeth, and his eyes blazed into the sunlit mist which mercilessly concealed the treacherous ice.

The man who rode over the Bodensee was better off. He could enjoy himself in peace while thinking over the daring passage which he had made. But we were obliged to attempt our danger again, for the thought of losing ourselves in an unknown neighborhood, begging strange people for a roof and for food, and finally also of being obliged to borrow our train fare to come back vanished almost before we thought it. We had started off on the narrow track in careless recklessness, but we went back fully conscious of the deadly peril through which we were going. I do not know how long it lasted—perhaps half an hour, perhaps three-quarters. We escaped scatheless, but I still shudder if I cross the lake to-day.

The whole misery of humanity grips me when I think of another experience which occurred during that time. Uncle Heinrich really became absolutely impossible, and if I had not known that myself, I would have learned it daily afresh from the "good aunt." Consequently, his relatives at Elbing had subscribed together and bought him a steerage passage for America, with the idea of bringing him, on alien soil, to happiness, prosperity, and the greater good of his soul. I had not seen him, myself, for a long time, but when I went to the town one evening before his departure I suddenly felt my shoulder gripped in the darkness, while an odor which I only knew too well spread itself lovingly around me.

I heard my uncle's voice. "You are a good lad, Hermann," he said, "and I am sure that you will never cast a stone at me. They are pushing me off now, and that is also quite right, because what else could they do with me? I have also said, 'Yes,' quite willingly, for a fellow can kick the bucket anywhere, and if he does do so he need not beg anyone's pardon for doing it in a strange country. Give your father my love and tell him that I am sorry, for his sake, that I have brought so much shame upon the family."

"That you have not done," I said.

"Do you think so?" he asked, and I could hear the tears in his uncertain voice. But he was always ready to weep. That was a minor effect of alcohol. He went on: "Well, well, it is more than enough for us Mennonites, for we are famous for our sobriety. I should like very much to tell you this evening how all this has come about. But when I think it over, I myself do not really know how it is. . . . It is all part of life, I suppose. . . . One little stone gets piled on another, and then still more, and then the whole edifice collapses suddenly. . . . I have collapsed, I don't even know why. For drink? . . . It is not that. That came later when there was nothing more to hope for. . . . So I can't even tell you to look at me as a terrible example. On the contrary, always have your drink. It is the only thing which is left to one when everything else has gone. . . . I could tell you so much, so very much. A whole bucket of filth which one calls human existence lies poured out before me this evening. But I don't wish to mislead you. . . . I'll just go and stand for a few minutes in front of 'The Golden Lion.' They won't let me in any longer, for I have too large a score there. But perhaps you have a few silver

groschen with you which I will give you back to-morrow when I get the money for my journey, for they will not leave me completely penniless, and so I can allow myself one more happy evening."

Swallowing down the bitter sob which had overcome me, I gave him the little that I possessed, and he disappeared in the darkness.

Two hours later, on my way home from Blechschmidt, with whom I had been working hard at mathematics, I saw him standing before "The Golden Lion," stamping his feet to keep himself warm, and whistling a song with his frozen lips that gradually dwindled inharmoniously into an icicle. And whether it was considerateness on my part, or cowardice, or heartlessness, I do not know, but to put it short, I slipped round him in a wide detour. The next day he appeared at dawn cheerfully in my aunt's house, which he had not entered for some time, took his ticket, passport, and the ready cash which, whether they liked it or not, the family had had to provide, and also the necessary warnings not to spend it all before his departure.

"What do you think?" he said, triumphantly. "If only I had once had such a large sum in my hand I should have been able to employ it profitably as investment capital, and I should now be standing before you as a rich man. But you will see that yet. Within a year I shall be rich, and you will finally be my rejoicing heirs." Then he carefully wrapped up the cigars which he had probably received as a parting present from one of his friends, with the exception of one which he stuck in his mouth, and disappeared—disappeared forever from my life, taking even his memory with him, until a few years later the news of his death came to us from over the ocean.

I was at home for the summer holiday when my father received the letter informing us of it from Elbing. He gazed for a long time at the page which contained it. Then he uttered the hopeless, bitterly despairing "Aeh" in which his view of the world was condensed, and walked out of the room. From that day to this nobody on earth worried about this lost soul, and thus I will close my account of him.

Shortly afterward an accident happened to me to which I have to thank all the good fortune of my life, education, my rise in the world, and the fact that I became a poet—everything. An older and stronger school friend, called Hamann, knocked my left knee against the lower hinge of the classroom door, with the result that I had a deep wound which kept me for weeks in bed, and then another long period confined to my room. At first I did not realize anything of my future happiness; I will speak of that later. The only clear idea which I had while I was lying there was that if the thought of reaching the lower second class had been mad before, it must now be condemned entirely to death, although Blechschmidt did his very best to post me up in the copious supply of knowledge which had been sprinkled over the class since then, most of which he had not understood, and of which I, of course, understood still less. The fact that I employed my time in learning a small volume of Goethe's poems by heart, and that I found a new Bible in Humboldt's *Kosmos*, could not help me to promotion.

Thus it was a case of farewell to the dreams of springtime happiness and approaching glory. Farewell to my secret madness and the wonderful pictures on which my eager soul had fully fed.

One day Blechschmidt informed me that the class master, Kutsch, had been heard to murmur the words, "It's a pity," when I was still reported as absent at the Monday roll call. "It's a pity"—why had he said so? for he did not usually do so if anyone stayed at home. So cotton wool was plugged into the wound, a bandage was wrapped round my knee, and in spite of the pain and fresh inflammation I hobbled to school. The way there was hard, and the sitting was still more painful—sitting for hours, for whole mornings, during which the muscles became stiff and the blood beat from my leg up to my forehead.

But Kutsch smiled contentedly, and even caused the corner place on my left side to be kept empty, so that I could rest my leg on the seat as occasion allowed.

And thus my secret madness bloomed afresh, and when once I was able to describe—taken, of course, from the *Kosmos*—the philosophy of Ptolemæus, it became a definite madness which buzzed in my ears day and night, so that I could not conceal my grief that it was only a madness. The end of the term came nearer and nearer. Rumors as to promotion lists ran from desk to desk, but my name was not on any of them. How should it be? There was a great discussion about another boy—von Dommer was his name—who had been sitting for about two years on the benches of Class 3B, and was still never able to answer a question. A harmless, pleasant lad, beloved by all, even by his teachers, although they could never get anything out of him.

"I advise you to leave school now, Dommer," Kutsch had once said. "You are only giving your parents unnecessary sorrow, and you will never pass the examination enabling you to be an *Einjähriger*

(*i.e.*, a soldier serving for only one year instead of the usual three). The unfortunate lad had bowed himself in respectful resignation. But we knew that he was a great favorite, and the prospects of his promotion again improved. How I envied him. Nobody would stand up for me, and if anyone pleaded on my behalf, Genrich, my deadly enemy, would have silenced him at once.

One fine morning, with the March sun blazing outside, bringing the icicles down with a clatter, I sat in the great school hall, with my stiff knee crowded in among the others of Class 3, while my beating heart robbed me of the power to breathe. It beat so fast that from time to time a fit of giddiness threw me either to right or to left, until a dig in the ribs from my neighbor restored me to consciousness.

He began with the sixth class, but we cared nothing as to which of the little idiots were to be promoted to the sixth. Then followed the fifth, then the fourth, and then it began to be thrilling. We were kept waiting for a second, for the list of those who were to be promoted to both the third classes had first to be finished. But now it became really serious.

"The following will be promoted to the 'lower second,' first of all from Class 3B," recited the director in a monotonous singsong. The list began with Claassen I. Of course, he was by far the best boy in the class—and then it went farther and farther. Blechschmidt's name was read, then that of Christoph, and many another. But one name, the poor, unimportant, unconsidered name which I should have liked to hear so much because it happened to belong to me, was missing, even when the list had been read to the bitter end. One last weak hope

comforted me. Perhaps he had omitted it by accident and would give it later. But he did not repeat the list. Without worrying about the idea that he had destroyed the glowing happiness of youth, he began to read the list of Class 3A in the same monotonous voice. All over.

Now I noticed for the first time how much my knee hurt me. A voice within me cried out: "Don't ever go back home again. Rather jump into the river Elbing."

The reading of the list of Class 3A came to an end, but instead of going on to the list of the second class he cleared his throat, looked at the paper more sharply through his spectacles, looked round the hall, smiled gently, and, raising his voice a little, but still in the same even tone, he uttered the words, "In addition to these are also the names of von Dommer and Sudermann."

CHAPTER VII

A LOUSY RASCAL

I HAD climbed the first slopes of human ambition and nobody could now laugh at me as an unripe boy, and if I had met Klara Hornig she would have been filled irresistibly with respect, if only owing to the fact that I had got into the second class.

Spring sent its first messengers over the country. The yellow cornel began to bloom, both the Petasites appeared as if they had waited for us the whole winter, and the coltsfoot showed its head again.

Now there began a new period of wandering over valley and hill, and our seeking and finding were carried out with a quiet conscience and with such a sense of superiority. There was nothing strange or unknown in wood or field, and if we had any doubt about some little plant, *Flora* and our "key" were ready to help us to gain a knowledge of its name and species from its leaves and blossoms.

In school everything went smoothly and comfortably. The new teachers, some of whom were very young, believed in a policy of live and let live, so long as we, too, lived up to it. But that we, unfortunately, did not always do. There was one of them who suffered from consumption, whom we really worried to death, and I am still ashamed of the fact that I helped to do so without pity or mercy.

There were two new subjects for me—physics and chemistry—with experiments which seemed to us very amusing, because we sat there like lords and watched

something especially prepared for us. It was funny enough, to begin with, that some kind of stuff could be thrown into water and would, in consequence, begin to burn. But that anyone could call that "learning" seemed to us to be almost like the land of Cockaigne. Latin, too, had no longer terrors for me. I copied my exercises from somebody else, and when it came to translation, one had a "crib" between the leaves of the book. Thus there were time and leisure enough for wandering. We now rarely went home on Saturday evening, and spent the night on some haystack or straw heap which the friendly farmers in the neighborhood spread for us on the cold tile stove. In the morning, one could get a pot of coffee and a slice of bread and butter, all for ten pfennigs, and where before I had run along with my friends in fear and trembling, I was now a regular member of the band, with my proper position in their high council. It is true that no one ever expected me to be a hero. And why should he? I had had no great experiences, neither had I any money, and Heaven had not given me the necessary cheek to make up for that. Therefore I had to be content if I was left alone, and could secretly enjoy the treasures which every fresh excursion poured into my lap. The feeling that I was a free personality, with a right to be free from the world, to be in touch with God, to express my devotion in revolt and rebellion, all that was poured into me by the red glow of the sunset, making me happy and intoxicating me.

I often did not know what to do with the fullness of my thoughts and visions, and roamed like a savage through the night-filled forest, while my companions, tired out, were fast asleep. In consequence, it was often nearly impossible to get me up from my straw

in the morning, and they had to shake me thoroughly before I could follow the others, still drunk with sleep.

My life became more and more divided into two halves. One I shared in common with all those around me, and there I was simply a harmless, quiet youngster who fought vigorously if he was beaten or jeered at, but who made it up quickly after every quarrel. But the higher portion of my life belonged to me alone. From it there arose a Jacob's ladder straight into heaven. There I was king, statesman, a sailor circumnavigating the world, and a prophet. There I held concourse with the great men of all times, and there a vast picture book was continually spread out before me. There I was noble, brave, generous, immeasurably rich, loved by all women, and the ruler of all. There I conquered the cleverest by the force of my speech, and was equal to the most learned in the fullness of my knowledge. In short, everything which I lacked in the other portion of my life was given me here as a free dowry of destiny. These dreams of greatness between the airy walls of which I was only too happy, one day collapsed miserably, in view of a discovery which robbed me of all self-respect and plunged me into despair.

For some time I had noticed a curious sensation on my head which was half painful and half a tickling, and which made me shudder far down my neck. It would usually disappear under pressure of my hand and with a little scratching. But if I had to sit still, as, for instance, at table or even at school, it bothered me so much that I often jumped up and ran to the door without asking for permission to do so. It was a disease, I felt, and certainly one which I could not talk about. An intuition which was more painful than the disease itself told me that. And one day I found

out what it was—something too terrible and incomprehensible—*I had lice!* I, Hermann Sudermann, the son of respectable parents, and my mother's darling; I, the chosen genius who was at home with the highest in humanity, and as noble as the noblest in my feelings—I had lice! Lice like any beggar child, dirty and neglected, who would not have been allowed to come into our rooms at home.

It was at the municipal petroleum sheds, the control of which had been handed over to my "good aunt," that I made the crushing discovery in handing out the casks. When the carters had driven off I locked myself in so as not to be surprised, and ran from shed to shed, crying: "Mamma! Mamma! Mamma!"

But mamma was a long way off, and if I had ventured to confess to the "good aunt" instead, who knew no pardon for much smaller faults, I should have been turned out on the spot. I could not even think of confiding in Blechschmidt. I had with difficulty gained a certain amount of respect from my companions. The jeers which had so often tortured me and driven me to despair before were just beginning to be less frequent, and if he had laughed at my misfortune I would rather have thrown myself into the river Elbing than allow the floods of scorn which were sure to follow to be poured over my unfortunate head. And so the only thing to do was to bear the burden of my shame by myself, and wait for a miracle to happen which would relieve me. During the days and weeks which now followed, I learned to know all the tortures of a guilty conscience. A murderer who has to carry the knowledge of the blood which he has shed as a guilty secret for all his life cannot have much more to bear.

A few years later, when I was in the first class, one of my school friends, who was otherwise by no means very intimate with me, came to me one evening with a curiously shy look round my room, bolted the door behind him, and fell before me as if he had been felled by an ax, and sobbed into the hands he held before his face, "I am syphilitic." And when I picked him up and comforted him, and took him off to get the necessary advice, I thought continually, remembering my days of anguish, how happy he was in that he was able to confess.

I do not know what would have ultimately happened to me, owing to this daily increasing despair, if I had not suddenly been pushed into a chair one day by the "good aunt," and before I could protect myself found myself hopelessly betrayed by two or three strokes of a tooth comb. And how thankful I was to her! I was not hunted out of the house to join the criminals; I got only a good scolding because I had put up with the evil for so long, until traces of my disease had made themselves visible around me without my knowing it. In the period which followed she also endeavored to spread the mantle of love over my wickedness. But in the twilight when, as usual, she passed her terrible judgment over the wickedness of the world, she could not help remembering to give an occasional verbal castigation to those of her fellow creatures who suffered from vermin or the itch or other disgusting diseases. My cousin, however, nodded with an early developed malice at these passages, and scratched herself with the nail of her little finger, first behind her right ear, and, if I pretended not to notice this, then right behind at the back of her head. But what did I care? I was saved, and could raise my head again and look forward fearlessly to the future.

But I only received my full absolution during the long holidays which this year I was allowed to spend at home. How my cup ran over with happiness! Then I took my courage in both hands and confessed to my mother. And when she took my dishonored close-cropped head between both her hands, kissed it, and said no more than, "My poor boy," then I suddenly felt that everything was in order.

I have experienced many a prick of conscience, many times a sense of guilt, during my life, and been obliged to put up with them in my heart if they were not to be shaken off. But none has tortured me more than the horror which I experienced at thirteen at being infected by these vermin, and the fear of being outcast from the society of respectable people.

Oh, that long holiday! It was then I saw for the first time how much suppressed love I had stored up within me which sought for satisfaction in giving and taking in return. I hung on to my mother's apron strings from early morning until late in the evening, so that she could get rid of me only with laughing embarrassment. I even ventured to come close to my father, who permitted me to pour the full flood of my wisdom over him, with astonishment, and, I think this time with a little pride. I wanted my younger brothers, who were still wearing out the benches at Fräulein Hubert's school, to become great botanists in six weeks, and bitter was my disappointment when they told me one day that the weeds which grew in the ditches at the sides of the road might perish forever, so far as they were concerned. My previous school friends greeted me patronizingly and were most unpleasantly disturbed to discover from me that I, too, had been promoted to the second class. When,

however, I had to confess that I did not belong to any forbidden school association, and had never even sat at a beer evening, I again acquired their contempt, which it seems to have been my destiny always to put up with. But I did not feel unhappy about them any more, for my stars had found a more fortunate conjunction for my journey to the heights. It was only when I saw them passing my father's house in joking intimacy with the fair-haired young girls of the village that my heart pricked me.

And then came the leave-taking, in which I also took leave of the flesh pots of Egypt, for, compared with the starvation rations which I got at Elbing, the economy of my father's house, dictated by poverty as it was, was comparative luxury.

Never had I been so homesick as when I again got back to the "good aunt." I wandered about as in a nightmare, and pressed back my tears wherever I stood or sat. But that, too, passed, and the day's work crowded out the remainder of my childish feelings.

Another winter came on, and I acquired a new passion with it—a passion for the theater. Years ago I told the story of this in describing the history of my first piece. I told there of my hopeless passion for the tragic actress Hermine Claar-Delis, who was playing in Elbing as a star, and also I described the sacred impulse which I acquired to dedicate my first theatrical piece to her.

When I think back to those winter days and the emotions which ate out my heart between the rows of casks in the petroleum shed, which I must fight against in blessed solitude, I think I may say that my future destiny was then decided, but it took nearly

two decades of wandering and of bypaths to bring me to my goal. I wonder if one ever does reach one's goal; I wonder if the bottomless cask into which our youthful imagination pours dream after dream, and plan upon plan for our own accomplishment, is ever filled, even at the end of a busy life, no matter how hard we have worked. It does not matter. The instinct which came to the top in me at that time, although it was afterward suppressed and covered up by the hard necessities of existence, was certainly a primeval instinct which had its roots in the deepest portion of my being. Although life, as I experienced it, tore it up as madness and threw it on the rubbish heap, it always grew up again until it one day grew into my daily bread and the law of my life.

I had one possibility even in those days of satisfying an impulse within me which caused me more fear than happiness, and that was, as I have already said, the German composition exercise. It was not that I looked forward to it with pleasure. On the contrary, I was just as lazy as everybody else. But during the night before I had to hand out my composition I became possessed regularly of a kind of demon. At ten o'clock I sat down grumbling to my work; at about eleven I saw quite clearly that I should never get it done in all my life. About midnight I began to feel as if I could work at it. About one o'clock I threw my rough work aside and began at once to make a fair copy. About two it would be necessary to refill the lamp while my fingers were cramped, because the fire had long since gone out. But that did not matter, because I was now warmed by the fire within me. By three I was pacing up and down my room with glowing cheeks, not knowing how to master the crowd of pictures which pressed them-

selves upon my mind. By four o'clock I had written far more than the number of lines which were demanded of us, but still had so much which I wanted to say that I could not stop, and as it was too late to go to bed at five o'clock, I preferred to go on writing until it was time to go to school. My compositions regularly brought me a warning, when they were given back to me, to avoid giving my imagination too free play, as that could only damage the common-sense so necessary for practical life. But even if I recognized how true that might be, I usually found my work marked as "Good" or "Very good," and then I was quite satisfied with myself.

About the same time I began to attend the classes preparatory to confirmation, and, it is true, without any particular enthusiasm, for I had long since finished with the dogmas of the Christian religion. The God whom I saw in the glow of the sunset or in the starry heavens, the God with whom I held solemn converse at the end of my compositions because the ecstasy into which I had gradually written myself needed this as the extreme devotion of the visionary—this Lord God of my dreams had little to do with the structure of wooden doctrine which the Protestant religion presented to me as God.

I took more interest in the delicate, thin-cheeked girls who sat opposite us in the sacristy, and with whom we were continually engaged in a lively exchange of glances which greatly relieved and enlivened the dreary nonsense of the superintendent. We never had an opportunity to approach them more closely; besides, the stupidity of unfledged youth closed the gates of that happy garden to us; and so we never went farther than a hopeless exchange of glances, which never blossomed into a real passion capable of

affecting the heart. Then, too, Klara Hornig was still there.

My heart had never lost its devotion to her, and the more violently my cousin represented her as a bundle of all disgraceful qualities the more painfully my love for her blossomed. If she were really so coquettish, fond of finery, so anxious to make conquests, and possessed of such a devil of conceit, from what a dizzy height, I thought, would she look down upon me, a miserable schoolboy—she who was already beginning her triumphal path in the ballroom.

That I had meanwhile leaped into the upper second class without difficulty, and that I was now singing the bass parts in the songs beautifully, but out of tune, could not make much difference to her.

And so between Easter and Whitsuntide I was confirmed. My mother had not spared the expense of the long journey in order to be with me on this occasion, and had climbed out of the train one evening all of a flutter and worried about her luggage. I do not know whether she had ever met the "good aunt" before, but in any case, as she always did, she brought a flood of love for her with her, and even the "good aunt" met her guest with unconcealed cordiality. But when I noticed the glances of the latter which she immediately exchanged with my cousin, my experience of them told me that the evening hours had now been provided with fresh material for the criticism of mankind.

My mother showed her surprise, on the second day after her arrival, when she saw my aunt employ her well-proved tactics of warming up the coffee again and again, and had an opportunity of tasting the barley which was continually simmering, and learned

her method of postponing any meal containing meat, on account of its expense.

That was why she looked so often at me, at times when she thought I was not looking, so anxiously and secretly, and that was why she thought that my cheeks were hollow and my arms very thin. But as a matter of fact, anyone who is growing as rapidly as I was is naturally thin. Also I did not get the benefit of the gymnastic lessons to make me strong, as I was not allowed to take part in them, owing to my knee, which was still weak. This quite apart from my two breakfast rolls which I was sacrificing so as to pay for my theater tickets.

The confirmation ceremony passed off without event. My mother had provided the meat for the festive meal which followed, and the "good aunt" had made Königsberger mince balls out of it because this dish permits of an almost endless addition of bread crumbs for its expansion.

While we were sitting enjoying our *Wackelpeter*—a kind of sweet blanc mange decorated with almonds (it was one of our favorite dishes)—my mother said, quite casually:

"At tea time this afternoon, my dear Hermann, we will go and visit the Hornigs."

O Lord! O Lord! My heart sank into my new confirmation shoes and my cousin's eyes sparkled with a green light.

"Not to-day, not to-day," I begged, to gain time, and my mother agreed that I might have my way, especially as it was probable that everyone would be at home on the morrow, as it was a weekday. This argument made me feel that I would rather have gone to-day, but that was now too late.

Toward the evening my cousin secretly brought me

a mirror with the words, "So that you can see whether you are fine enough"; but she came far too late; I had already looked at that mirror.

I slept but little that night. All kinds of terrible thoughts passed through my mind. First of all, what clothes could I wear? My Sunday jacket had become very tight, and the new coat which had been bought for my confirmation had been cut with the idea of providing for my growth, and neither was at all fashionable.

Then again, what was one to talk about? What can one say to a young lady who is accustomed to go to balls and receive the homage of a queen? I knew from novels, more or less, how the lions of society behave under such circumstances, but the question was, could I do the like? I who had run away from her two years before with a dribbling nose. My blood froze in my veins when I thought of that defeat.

But worrying was no use. If no miracle occurred to save me from the visit, a humiliation stared me in the face which I should have to put up with for two years or more, for I was still smarting under the pain of the first.

The hours at school passed without my knowing what was happening around me, and when I got home in the afternoon I found my mother already dressed and ready to go. I wanted to change.

"Stay as you are," said my mother, with a little caress which did me lots of good. Then we started out.

Again I stood before the dark door every inch of which I knew and remembered from my visit of two years before, and then old Frau Hornig appeared and asked, "What can I do for you?" Then both the women gave a cry and embraced each other. Then the crippled sister with her pale, patient face also

appeared, and the scene was repeated. Then, however, came my turn.

"Is that really your son Hermann? Grown so much in two years? I should never have recognized him. . . . And why has he never been to see us again? . . . I suppose he did not enjoy himself. . . . We have asked ourselves so often why does not that nice boy come to see us again. But we could never have imagined, of course, that he had meanwhile become such a big young man. . . . Klara, Klara, come in quick and see who is here! You will be surprised!"

And there she stood and showed her surprise, opened those large, large blue eyes which I saw before me day and night and always, and from which I had run away in the Brückstrasse, and at the railway station, and at Vogelsang, and everywhere else during the last two years. And to-day she was neither proud nor an elegant lady at a ball, but a charming girl of seventeen. Grown tall, no doubt, but still a girl, not much different from those who had been confirmed with me. Fine, with a delicate, small face and breasts just beginning to grow. I felt that the misery which had crippled me disappeared in her presence like the tattered rags of a beggar, and I suddenly became a free, cheerful, and clear-seeing man.

Oh no, I was no longer that little clumsy boy who had crept out of the backwoods of Lithuania, not knowing what to do with his arms and his feet, who finally ran away because he had no pocket handkerchief. I had now proved my prowess with better men than myself, and I could now stand my ground even in the presence of young girls. I had lived, I was grown up, and my spirit stretched itself eagerly forward to the coming dialogue. That came very soon. My mother had, of course, to see the shop in which

she had once ruled as saleswoman. There there were alterations without end. The doll department had increased considerably. There were novelties, such as steam engines and railways, and I know not what else besides. In short, it happened that after a short half hour Klara and I were sitting opposite each other and exchanging our views on the world earnestly and eagerly, as if we had nothing more pressing to do than to show each other the secret treasures of our hearts, and as I gave full rein to the thoughts that swelled up in me she leaned her hands against the cold stove and swayed from right to left, listening with enthusiasm and with a little astonishment in her eyes which completely intoxicated me.

"Oh, what a pity!" she suddenly interrupted.

"A pity? Why?" said I.

"Now do you think that I have not noticed that you would have nothing to do with me?" she said, smiling.

"How so, then?" I stammered, feeling myself blush to the roots of my hair.

"Well now, do you think I have not noticed that you always crossed over to the other side of the street when I met you?"

"Did you really notice that?"

"And I always asked myself what harm I could really have done you; but your cousin was, of course, the cause, for I know that she did not speak kindly of me even when I was at school."

"She has not done so to me," I exclaimed, glad to see how readily I could tell that lie. "And if she had done so, I would certainly not have put up with it."

Now it was her turn to blush, and we passed swiftly to the subject of German literature, where we had

firmer ground under our feet. We agreed earnestly in our admiration of Waldmeister's "Brautfahrt" and "Was der Wald erzählt," and we had the same delight in "Prinzessin Ilse." On the other hand, I was the more critical of Geibel, whom she did not know. She willingly agreed with me that a five-foot iambic consisting of "Oh, Sophonisbe, Sophonisbe, oh!" was a crime aginst German literature. She also promised me to make herself more closely acquainted with a younger poet, called Paul Heyse, although she had already been warned against the immoral looseness of his writings.

I observed with delight that I was gaining more and more influence over her from minute to minute, and when I expressed my enthusiasm over a fine work of Hammerling with glowing words she listened to me as attentively as if I were the messenger of some new world.

Then our mothers came back, and the poor pale sister laid some cream cakes on the table, which had meanwhile come from the confectioner.

The dream of reading more of each other's hearts had come to an end. We sat there in silence while the progress which the toy business had made during the last twenty years was discussed with expert knowledge. The son and heir of the business was, unfortunately, away, otherwise I might have learned the subject in greater detail. But while I sat bent forward, full of eagerness to learn, and listened to the explanations of the old lady, I was blissfully aware at times that a wide-eyed questioning glance came in my direction which dissolved again into pleasant meditation.

And so we parted. I promised to come again soon. I promised to go with her to Vogelsang, and I was even to meet her in the Kasino garden, that sacred

area which remained a forbidden and eagerly longed-for Eden for the mass of those who were not the select.

The fullness of life spread its golden doors wide open before me. Too much sunshine and satisfied longing was poured out on my head that day; too much, at least, for a poor devil to whom destiny had allotted a place on the shadowy side. It all turned out differently, very differently.

A short time after my mother had left Elbing I overheard, without meaning to do so, one of my aunt's favorite twilight conversations, in which she and my cousin always agreed as to the wickedness of mankind, and that time the subject of their discussion was no other than myself. To my consternation, I discovered that I was a common little boor, a dangerous waster, a lousy rascal who was growing more and more every day to be a nuisance to the neighborhood, while my appetite threatened to go beyond any possible limit of decency. It was much worse since my mother had been there, for, although she was descended from starving parents, she had shown a reprehensible tendency toward pride and extravagance. Since then it was impossible to get on with me, and the fact that I was a friend of the Hornigs, the darkness of whose natures had already been proven by the fact that they had forced their way into the Kasino circle while other people, who were also very respectable, only wished to be received at the ordinary "Ressource," filled the cup to overflowing. It was, therefore, necessary to take the first opportunity that offered to get rid of me once and for all.

I did my best to meet their wishes. I did not ask for any satisfaction, not even that of defending myself. I stole on tiptoe out to the gate, took down the key of the petroleum sheds from its nail, and walked up

and down till late in the night along the wooden paling which surrounded the grass-covered courtyard. I had fought out a great many of my troubles there, and there again I must look for salvation. Away, away, from this unhappy house—that was the alpha and omega of my thoughts. But what was I to do? It was quite plain that my father could not possibly pay what one of the usual boarding schools for boys would demand, neither at Elbing nor anywhere else. So there was nothing else to do but leave school and take up one of the careers for which my leaving certificate was sufficient. But that meant, of course, saying farewell to the path which led up to the heights of fulfillment of my most sacred wishes. That meant saying farewell forever to all my hopes and dreams. But how could it be helped? I would not stay a day longer than necessary in this house in which I was regarded as a troublesome interloper. The choice of careers that opened to me was wide. I might become a merchant, a bookseller, a minor official, or something of that order. But I had a horror of all of these careers, for they seemed to me to lead away from science and, as I thought, to drive me into the arms of dull stupidity. There was only one career which seemed to me to be anything like one of the higher walks of life and which even demanded a university curriculum later on, during which, of course, one could go to hear other lectures. That was, of course, that of an apothecary.

Besides, an apothecary was half a chemist, and chemistry was at that time my latest form of insanity. I had even made myself a so-called laboratory a short time before. I had a box full of retorts and bulbs and pipettes and burettes and all the rest of the devilish gear with the help of which one could make the most

unholy compounds which stank horribly and burned holes in my Sunday trousers.

It would be possible to extend that laboratory into something really fine. I could work in it during my free hours, and could make great discoveries, ending up finally as a professor, as famous men always did, even if they did not have the usual career behind them.

Short and good, I would become an apothecary, like my cousin who had long since gone out to enjoy the air of the great world as a pharmaceutist and who was now at Haspe in Westpahlia—where "ulk" was produced—whence he sent us parcels of stomach lozenges, ginger wine, and fruit extracts made by himself, the like of which had never been seen before.

The next afternoon I wrote a letter home in which I asked my father to inquire whether old Settegast at Heydekrug would take me as apprentice in his apothecary's shop. And to prove that I was really fitted for that career, or rather to prove that this career was really not good enough for me, I added an extra sheet of paper containing a list of all my chemical and botanical knowledge, which, I thought, would make an immense impression on my future instructor. I was not sparing of foreign words such as were to be found in Stoeckjart's *School of Chemistry*. I thoroughly understood what was to be expected of a disciple of science so far as analysis and synthesis were concerned. I also incidentally had a thorough knowledge of botany, and as for practical experiments, I had long been working successfully in my own laboratory.

I am still thankful to my parents for suppressing with a sure instinct this outbreak of youthful megalomania. Otherwise, old Settegast would probably have refused me instead of sending me his consent by

return of post. Well now, my hour had struck and now the time had come to square matters up. When I came to my aunt and cousin with my mother's letter in my hand, however, I did not get further than a modest statement to the effect that I should not be a burden to them any longer and should like to leave the house the next day.

"Just as you like," said the "good aunt," indifferently, and my cousin's eyes sparkled with a green light.

That same afternoon, with a beating heart, I knocked at the door of the director's study. I still hoped that some miracle might happen that would prevent my departure. But nothing happened except that he looked at me for some seconds thoughtfully from behind his glasses, murmured a few words which I did not catch, and benevolently handed me over a swiftly written certificate with his good wishes for my future career. And I was so upset and so much hurt that I did not shed a single tear in this moment of despairing resignation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE APOTHECARY'S SHOP

THE world which had been mine vanished, and in its place I came into a salesroom with a rectangular counter, long shelves on the walls, and a large cupboard-like structure in the middle, behind the locked doors of which the poisons lay concealed. Near it stood the etheric oils, but these were not under lock and key.

The poisons. It was they that lent something secret and romantic to the business. I could have poisoned not only myself, but whole families, and even whole villages and towns, if I had liked. Often, when no one could come in and surprise me, I used to fondle the broad-necked bottles and feel myself indued with the power of life and death.

My official activity, on the other hand, consisted, to begin with, in making paper bags. This I learned quickly. I can still make them to-day and I am prepared to prove it to anyone who doubts it. *This* art, at least, my critics cannot deny me.

And so I found myself initiated into the duties of retail trade, and that is as far as it got. Cough lozenges, camomile tea, rhubarb, liquorice, stomachic drops, powders for the pigs, castoreum, asafœtida (filthy stuff), and Heaven alone knows what else, soon went with matter-of-fact rapidity through my hands. The cough drops are thoroughly entitled to lead this list, for they aroused in me a desire to help myself to them by stealth, which, however, soon was changed into disgust.

In addition to the things which I have mentioned, there were all kinds of mysterious substances which were asked for in a low tone and which were produced in the most professional manner from the most harmless-looking bottles and boxes—things like drops for women's complaints, love potions, insect powder, mosquito ointment, and a number of strange recipes in which lay hidden the magic wisdom of "wise women."

"Old Settegast," my highly revered chief, gave me the necessary instructions himself, for he had no assistant.

This old gentleman passed through many years of my youth as a benevolent spirit. His house remained for me a second home long after I had ceased to work for him, and even as a student I used to help him on market days when expert hands were necessary, just for love of him and the fun of the thing, working hard to satisfy the desires of the Lithuanians who crowded in front of his counter clamoring for quack remedies. I was proud of being able to talk to them in their own language and of being able to understand their national peculiarities.

But my ambition soared higher. I had learned the business of selling within a month. I knew the place of every drug; I knew its price and was perfectly at home with the slang in which my customers asked for what they wanted. There was, however, a regulation of the highest medical authorities, according to which apprentices were not permitted to make up prescriptions until the third year of their apprenticeship, and then only under supervision, and this shut me out from the higher activities which should now have followed. I saw before me two endless years of the dullest kind of shop-assistant life before I could dream

of taking my place at that holy of holies, the dispensing table, and at the same time it did not seem to me that even here there was anything particularly difficult to learn. I had soon observed how old Settegast rolled pills, ground stuff in a mortar, boiled up his medicines and filtered them, and I was even permitted to stand at his side and help him by handing him things. But when he took his siesta and I had no reason to fear that he would surprise me at the work, then I made efforts on my own account in all secrecy, and with a beating heart, to solve the riddles contained in the doctors' prescriptions. I kept the shop door open so that the bell should not wake him, and if a customer appeared I laid my finger meaningly on my lips, whereupon his speech immediately sank to an anxious whisper, for everybody knew that old Settegast was nearly seventy, and, therefore, badly needed his midday rest.

And so I gradually learned to make up every ointment, every mixture the prescription for which happened to be in the shop at the moment, including the right label and description. As soon as I had finished I hastily cleaned the implements, put weights and bottles in their places, and placed the medicine I had prepared in my pocket. During the evening I stowed it away in my box where nobody could see it.

And if old Settegast turned up in the afternoon, yawning and with flushed cheeks, to make up the potions and mix the ointments, then I stood by him, watching him with eager eyes to be certain that he was carrying out the instructions absolutely correctly.

This was during the second month of my apprenticeship. It began in July, and when we came to the end of September my curiosity as an apothecary was completely satisfied.

How much misery I should have caused or the death of how many people by poison I should have had on my conscience if I had been let loose on suffering humanity with my unripe knowledge, I will leave to your imagination. But at any rate I imagined in my conceit that I had nothing more to learn.

Meanwhile I repented my hasty step more and more every day. Late in the evening, when I had shut the double doors of the shop and put out the hanging lamp, I went up to my room and wondered to myself: "What did they do at school to-day? How far have they got in Ovid? What equations have they solved? What French grammar have they done?"

I had brought all my books with me. They stood in a narrow cupboard close to the broken-down sofa, and looked at me reproachfully. And they gave me no peace until I had opened them and tried to catch up the work which I had missed during the day. But after the tiring work of the day, which kept me on my feet from seven in the morning until ten at night—for the only chair which stood in the window corner behind the dispensing table was not placed there for me to sit on—and after so much running about and toil I was far too tired to master the mental work which my fear of being banished forever from the realms of knowledge demanded from me. My Latin verses made no sense, and the equations found no solution. But as a general rule I went fast asleep over my books in a few minutes, and did not stir until the sun awoke me.

It can easily be imagined that I did not become stronger under these circumstances.

When my free afternoon came, which I got once every fortnight and which I naturally spent at home,

I wandered about in a dream until dusk, until finally I would fall from my chair, often in the middle of a sentence, throw myself on the nearest bed, and remain fast asleep there until, at eleven o'clock, my mother woke me up to tell me that it was high time to go back to the shop. My free Sundays, which I also got once a fortnight, were passed much in the same way, except that I used to bring home an armful of books out of which I intended to learn Heaven knows how much.

But as a general rule nothing much happened other than that I wrote a highfaluting letter to Blechschmidt in which I spoke of moral nobility of spirit and unselfish resignation. Then, one day, I got the news from him that the musty schooling stuck in his throat and that he was thirsty for a draught from the bosom of life. He had, consequently, determined to become a bold sailor and to make a start by going to Hamburg and becoming an apprentice on a ship. He would be only too glad to let me share in the wealth of his experiences, and proposed, therefore, to keep a diary which should be given to a later world as a personal document of great value.

This diary began and also ended during his journey through Berlin. It consisted of twelve pages of description of a visit which he had paid to the Orpheum, an institution which, translated into the language of to-day, would probably call itself Amorsaele, and contained æsthetic reflections over the bountifulness of the joy which woman's kindness can give to man. A postscript added that he was proceeding to Hamburg on foot out of love for new scenery as well as owing to a sudden shortage of cash. Then the letters stopped and it was not until much, much later—years later—that I received another from

him, the last in his life, in which he informed me that, although in the deepest depths of human degradation, he had there found his Saviour and had thus been led to become a rejoicing "child of God."

And so the nearer connection between myself and my previous existence was broken. Even the picture of Klara Hornig paled. I had left her without saying good-by and seventeen years went by before I spoke to her again.

My new life tortured me so much, and the thought that I had thrown away my hope of salvation in a fit of anger hurt so much that every gentle memory was pushed into the background.

I could not, of course, conceal my suffering from my mother. I often felt her rough hand pass comfortingly over my forehead, and oftener than before she said, "My poor lad," in a voice which trembled with compassion. My father was always good to me during this period. The career I had chosen and the future to which I was going forward fulfilled his idea of middle-class advancement. His business was also going fairly well, so that he was gentler than usual in his intercourse with those around him. I do not remember that he ever scolded me, and often when he gave me his hand in welcome there was almost a smile on his gloomy features.

It was hardest on me when the Michaelmas holidays began and I had to watch my friends dawdling along the streets. They greeted me carelessly as one who was now their unquestioned equal, and even came into the shop one day to visit me, and to get me, as was customary, to mix them up a drink. They did not pay for it, of course, for I was alone in the shop. That I paid the money for it out of my own pocket and put it into the till as quickly as possible must not

be ascribed to too strict a conscience, but to the feeling that I could not allow myself to take anything gratis for them.

About that time, my weak knee that I had not noticed at all for eighteen months again began to make itself felt. The long hours on my feet, which on market days began at 4 A.M. and lasted till 10 at night, did not do the weakened sinews any good. I grew more and more tired every week, and my fatigue was so great that I often pulled out a drawer to rest myself by sitting on it.

I told old Settegast nothing about it, for it was my ambition to be irreproachable. But one of his two daughters—girls rather older than myself who showed me an indifferent kindliness—noticed this secret sitting and asked some searching questions. I evaded them blushingly, and to avoid being observed again I denied myself even this temporary rest.

I was terribly afraid of my chief. He treated me with a matter-of-fact severity which seemed to me a matter of course, for I had really never yet met a gentle-natured man. What I was most frightened of were the outbursts of rage which never failed if I damaged any of his implements, for, like most old people, he clung passionately to every scrap and every piece of pottery to which he was accustomed.

His choicest possession, the greatest treasure in the house, was an enormous mortar made of the finest porcelain, which was only taken out of its case on rare occasions when large quantities had to be mixed up.

One day we had to mix up a powder.

"If you will promise to be very careful, Sudermann," said my chief, "I will let you have the big mortar for it."

I laughed at the idea that anything could happen to the big mortar, the fabulous cost of which seemed to put it beyond the reach of any carelessness on my part, and so the old man went upstairs to bed with a light heart, for it happened to be just about two o'clock. I went to my work with the respect which the occasion demanded. I ground and ground, harder and harder, for the size of the mortar made it necessary to use my arms more freely.

And then, suddenly, there was the sound of a little tinkle such as one hears if one breaks a glass rod, and the two noble halves of the mortar separated gently from one another as if they were meant to do so.

My heart stopped beating. What on earth was I to do? No amount of pocket money could pay for this loss, even if I saved it up for months and months. But how could I withstand the storm of wrath which made my limbs tremble if I dropped so much as an empty bottle.

Could I dash off home and beg my father to give me the money? But I could not leave the shop, and, whatever happened, the discovery of the catastrophe would certainly come first.

In my despair, I ran up to the loft where we kept our herbs, and down to the cellar where we kept our bottles, up and down, up and down, but without finding a solution or help. The best thing seemed to be to write a letter, fly the shop, and never come back again.

There he stood. He had not had enough sleep and was grumbling and ready to scold. I bowed my head, pressed my hands against my stomach, which hurt me, owing to my excitement, and stammered softly into vacancy:

"I have broken the great mortar."

And what did he do? He looked at me for a few seconds, moved his toothless mouth, and said:

"Oh, well, never mind; that can happen to anybody."

I could kiss the old man's hand in gratitude to-day when I think of the joy of the relief which streamed over me at that moment.

But in spite of such kindness, I did not dare to let my chief know about the suffering which tortured me during the day. What could he have done to help me, and as a matter of fact, at the bottom of my heart I did not *want* him to help me. I wanted to go back to school, and my damaged knee gave me the only possible opportunity of doing so. For, if my father was convinced that this could not go on any longer and that I was threatened with becoming a cripple, then perhaps he might . . . Such immeasurable bliss was not to be thought of. It was a madness like so many other things in my life, but just for that reason I clung hard to the idea.

One day I ventured to confide it to my mother. She nodded sadly and said:

"Do you think, my lad, that I have not known that for ever so long?" Yes, but she had done more. She had succeeded by laborious spadework in making the idea palatable to my father; but ten thalers for board, and then the school fees, and books as well, it was still not to be thought of.

Perhaps, I thought, if the doctor would give a strong opinion. Yes, but which doctor?

Properly speaking, we had none. A young man had recently appeared at Heydekrug as the *locum tenens* of the regular physician, who was away. But few people thought much of him.

But there was Doctor Kittel, who came over daily from Russ, a large village about five miles off. He

was a giant, with a giant's strength and endurance. There were a thousand stories continually in circulation about him. He drank whole gatherings laughingly under the table. Clothed in a red petticoat, he had crossed over the broken ice of the Haff because otherwise he could not have got home from a woman in childbed, whose life he had saved, and much else besides.

Every day he passed me on his way to the Old Room, which was a half-secret wine saloon for the most respectable people, to write a few prescriptions, and at the same time to drink a bottle of the red wine for which Settegast was famous. His great rolling eyes looked me over indifferently. His deep bass voice growled out, "Morning," and his fiery-red beard disappeared like a blazing flame behind the door. And was I to stop a man like this, to whom I looked up with boundless reverence, and in whose presence my voice disappeared when he, as it often happened, came to me with some question on business? Was I to stop such a man and ask him for help?

I did not see how I could find the courage for such a desperate deed.

Then, one noon when old Settegast accompanied him to the door, he suddenly turned round, looked me over for a time under his deep, bristling eyebrows, and said:

"Are you young Sudermann?"

I stammered assent.

"Then come behind the dispensing table and remove your trousers."

The dispensing table was hidden behind a screen, that the people in the shop could not see what was happening there, so one could undress oneself behind it in peace.

Turning to the old man he added, in explanation: "His mother has written to me and told me that he cannot endure the standing because he has a sick knee. I'll just have a look at it."

He, of course, noticed at once the scar on my knee cap.

"Oho!" he said, "but that would not be any reason."

Then he passed my knee cap between his thumb and first finger, and rubbed the sinews.

"An obvious case of articular weakness" he thundered, and then looking me in the face, he said:

"You will have to wear bandages, young man, and look out for another profession. Morning, Herr Settegast."

My heart was in my mouth and my chains fell from me. I could have cried and screamed with delight, but the old man was still there.

"The district doctor will be back, soon," he said, "I should like to keep you, and I suppose you would like to stay, too."

"Of course," I lied, while a new terror fell upon me.

"Then, just to be certain, we will also ask him."

We also asked this doctor's opinion, but it made no difference in the result. That Rohling who had thrown me against the hinge of the door two years before was my savior, for otherwise I should still be standing behind the dispensing table, mixing prescriptions for influenza.

My mother had meanwhile, in the course of many a nightly battle of words, broken open the gate of my new paradise for me. And when I appeared at home this afternoon, limping somewhat more than necessary, and with hypocritical sadness on my face, to inform

them of the doctor's decision, my father had already agreed that, if necessary, my mother might travel to Tilsit with me to enter me at the Realgymnasium there.

And so it happened. Some days later we took our seats in the post wagon and clattered over the thirty-five miles which separated me from hope and happiness.

And then again, as had been the case when I tried to enter the third class, I stood before a school authority who measured me up with the eyes of a judge.

He was a big man, somewhat portly, but carried it well, with clipped gray hair and a long beard which was half hidden under the high collar which elderly gentlemen then still wore.

His name was Koch, and stands written with golden letters in the book of my life. He, too, made difficulties, just as the first director had done, but they were child play compared with the desperate struggle of that occasion. I rattled off my Ovid, for I had been allowed to pick out the place myself. The irregular verbs had meanwhile become the "iron ration" of my knowledge of French, and the fact that I still knew nothing of trigonometry was, indeed, a great pity. "But," said I bravely, "I will soon catch up with it. I have got through greater difficulties, Herr Director."

"Well, what, for example?" he said, smiling.

Then I told him glibly the story of the failure of the attempt to put me back to the fourth class, and that I had managed to avoid spending two years in the second class.

"I rather like that," he said, "but you must avoid becoming conceited, my friend."

I turned red, and was so much ashamed that the joy of coming back to the upper second class had a drop of bitterness in it.

Then we went off to look for a boarding house. I do not know who had first given my mother the name of Frau Rendant Reimer. But at any rate two hours later we stood before a friendly old wrinkled woman who told us that she had one place free, and would we please come in.

And when the most important matters had been settled—eight thalers monthly for board and one thaler for service, it turned out in the course of the usual endeavor to find mutual connections that my mother and she were real half cousins, and that the man with the pigtail and powder in the faded oil painting which hung close to the stove could be none other than my actual great-grandfather. There was great rejoicing, and the two women decided to use the familiar "thou" at once, and to seal the new friendship I was given the oil picture, which had descended to the old lady from some inheritance, and it was packed up for me to take away under my arm.

"For you have a greater right to it than I have," said our new relative.

We went to the post wagon, and neither of us spoke a word. When we were seated on the gray cushions my mother took the picture on her lap and looked for likenesses between it and one or another of her relatives. Her grandfather she had never seen.

I, however, closed my eyes, thought over the happy school days to come, and considered that life was a fairy tale and a beautiful fairy tale. And I also thought over the man with the great red beard and the rolling eyes like a god. It was he who had helped me to all this happiness.

To-day he is a blind old man and lives like a patriarch at Königsberg, adored by the youth growing up around him, sitting at the Germania beer table,

where I visited him a short time ago. During the war he had undertaken the secretarial work of this students' association and maintained an exchange of letters between the members fighting all over the world, so that each knew exactly what was happening to his fellow members.

We became friends in later life, and if I continue these reminiscences I shall have much to tell of him. I have to thank him for the material for the "Journey to Tilsit" which appeared in my Lithuanian sketches. It is no invention.

Yes, it is true that we live in fairy tales, but we seldom realize it.

CHAPTER IX

FEMININE, ALL TOO FEMININE

AND again a new world arose around me. All that had been at Elbing, in spite of my prosperity, a matter of inner revolt and heavy struggles with my conscience, was changed here to comfort, good will, a consciousness of being protected, and the happiness renewed every day of being in my right place.

I found a house in which peace, fine feeling, and the tenderest consideration ruled. It was lower middle class in its forms, but illuminated by the goodness which its inmates showed to one another and received in return as a matter of course.

At school I was able to hold my ground. It is true that there was much lacking, and the sine and co-sine business was neither so amusing nor so simple as I had imagined. But my German compositions came to the rescue and soon gave me the place which I wanted. One of them I gave to a school fellow to read after it had been returned to me, and at the end of the lesson he said to me:

"My dear chap, where did you get that from? It is almost as if it had been taken from the *Gartenlaube*."

I don't think any praise ever made me so proud as this. The position of the model schoolboy which Claassen I had held at Elbing was here held by a boy who had once lived at Heydekrug, the son of an excise official who had once examined and controlled the brewing at my father's brewery, and who was a good friend of my parents. He was a modest little chap

who took no interest in disorderly behavior, but who was also without any inordinate ambition. Everyone realized that he could do the best extemporary translations, but nobody envied him; just as little he envied me for my German composition.

"If Hermann liked, he could put us all into his pocket," he told my mother once later on, at a time where I was sailing through the first class on the flowery barge of youthful libertinage, and this expression of opinion was more precious to me than all the certificates in the world.

Oh, I wanted to, all right! I have never been an idler, but there were too many temptations. There were too many sweet little girls who took their evening walk on the pavement of the Hohestrasse and who would have felt hurt if I had been absent. (They still walk there, as I recently ascertained, and they are just as sweet as ever, but not one of them turned round to look after me.) And then, if our nightly beer prowls had been carried out except under my leadership, I should have felt. . . . But of that later.

At first I sat quietly in the corner by the stove, which grew terribly cold, and worked hard night after night, for I wished, as an outsider, to pass the examination which stood between us and the first class, with credit.

I do not think that desire of knowledge got much out of me. It was rather a desire to prove myself worthy of the luck which had fallen on me from heaven, which kept me up undressed until morning, and I had, besides, a force driving me toward life which had been so long suppressed, which burst all the bounds of common sense, and which threw the proper hours of sleep overboard as so much superfluous ballast.

There was also a special reward for industrious folk between 2 and 3 A.M., for the sake of which alone it was worth while sitting up. For when the baker drew out his butter cakes from the oven, glowing hot, there would be five or six of us in front of the shuttered shop—although the temperature was often about zero—who loitered about until a sleepy apprentice pushed out the cakes, which one could scarcely touch, so hot they were, through the lattice window. And we ate them in this state without our stomachs complaining. We washed them down with a tooth glass of warmed-up coffee and then tried to go on working.

But our brains refused. There was a spot between the stove and the wall which still kept warm—it is the same from which at other times you cannot induce a dachshund to come out except with a lavish hand; there one leaned and rested until the dragoons trumpeted forth their awakening into the darkness at 5.30, and then slept again until breakfast suddenly appeared in the gloom of a winter dawn.

That is what I called "working all night."

But my youthful body was so full of vigor, my unused mind was so full of energy, that even this silliness brought with it no evil results, and my time in class passed with so much eager excitement that it seemed as if I had spent the night quietly between the blankets.

My schoolfellows, generally speaking, had nothing against me. I was neither a prig nor a killjoy, and believed in helping and being helped, as the law of reciprocity provides for.

There were only two youngsters who looked at me askance from the day of my entry and who left no stone unturned to try and stir up the class against me.

They were two boys who knew me well from old times, my home companions, the playmates of my youth, whom I met again after so many years—Louis Damarau and Albin Dobinsky.

They obviousy expected that a fresh and dreary flood of teasing and scorn could be poured over me, and were deeply disappointed when no one showed any desire to make a common attack with them against me.

Then they tried it on their own. One afternoon I succeeded, in answer to some question about petrifaction, in showing that I knew something of the previous history of the lycopodiums. I think that *Kosmos* was responsible for this, as for much else. Dobinsky thereupon declared that this could not be tolerated any longer. It was time that I was taken down a peg, and if no one else cared to do so he would attend to the job himself.

When school was over he challenged me to stay behind for a bit. I knew what that meant and that it was neck or nothing. Though I was no longer an urchin, as I was in the third class, when I had to take my lickings without being able to help myself, but a tall, thickset youth who knew how to defend himself at a pinch, it was scarcely to be thought of that I could stand up to a tall, muscular fellow such as he was.

The class room emptied except for a few who were curious to see the fun.

Dobinsky approached me and lifted his hands like a butcher.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"I'll show you in a moment," he answered, and clasped me to his chest and threw me on my back over the nearest desk.

I struggled, and he tried to force me down with his

knees. Then I hit him in the face with my fists, again and again and again. Warm blood was running into my eyes—whether his or mine, I did not know—I only went on hitting out blindly, as if I hoped to revenge all the injuries which I had ever received from him.

And behold! the iron vise of his arms slackened, the weight of his body was lifted from me, and as I arose, wiping the blood out of my eyes, I saw him leaning against the window sill, puffing and blowing, being comforted by the others, while he tried to clean his bloodstained face.

Thereafter, I was left in peace. Even Louis Damarau became bearable, and a few months later both vanished from my horizon. One became a merchant and is said to have died at Moscow, the other to have taken up some "middle class" career. I never heard any more.

The third of the band—I have called him Hallgarten—had just taken his leaving certificate when I was promoted to the first class at Easter. When I met him on the Memel steamer on our way home, he was already wearing a red "Mulpus" cap and was consequently miles above me.

But I, too, had passed my examination not ingloriously, and one result had given me reasons for justifiable pride.

Although I had caught up most subjects with some difficulty, so that even that wicked trigonometry no longer withheld any secrets from me, I accidentally got a "turn down" in geography. This was the vivid expression we used to describe the boundless ignorance of some one into whose dark brain no glimmer of knowledge could penetrate.

One day our teacher, who, as usual, taught both subjects, suddenly informed us in the history lesson

that he would take the geography examination that day.

A cold wave of terror ran through my limbs, for I had hoped to stop up this gap in my knowledge during the fortnight which lay before the probable date of this examination. The nearer the martyrdom of questioning came to me, I felt myself shaken more and more by a fever of fear, and when I really had to endure it I sat frozen stiff and stared silently, with swimming eyes, into vacancy.

"As you are, otherwise, a satisfactory pupil," said the examiner, "I will assume that you are the victim of some temporary confusion and shall expect you to come and see me at my house to-morrow so that I can examine you again."

I was overcome with joy. Between 4 P.M. and 8 A.M. there were sixteen hours, and I could surely master such a silly subsidiary subject in that time.

And so I started. I began with South America, for I had once been very much at home in the Andes with my friend, Alexander von Humboldt. About 7 P.M. I crossed over to the United States. By 10 I had finished off Africa, and by 1 A.M. I was roaming through Turkestan and Tibet, as if Sven Hedin, who was then not yet in existence, had been my traveling companion. I gave up my hot rolls and avoided the stove corner even more carefully. But when the reveille of the dragoons sounded there was no town or river in the countries of our present and perpetual enemies which I could not repeat.

"Very good," I said to myself at 7 A.M., and shut up my atlas. "If I am not by chance asked something about the geography of the planet Mars, I shall get through."

And I got through.

"Extraordinary," said my teacher after a half an hour's examination. "I could not believe that anyone could become so absent-minded as you were yesterday."

I told this story—perhaps rather more boastfully than I have done here—to my friend Hallgarten, on the boat.

"I know you are a wretched swindler, Sudermann," said he, "and if you are not, then let me ask you three questions."

"Of course," I answered, carelessly.

Then he hesitated, and ruminated for a bit so as to make his questions as difficult as possible.

The first was, "What is the port for Mecca?"

"Jeddah," said I.

The second was, "What is the southern point of the plateau of the Dekkan?"

"The Alidshiri and Neladshiri Mountains," I said.

He did not worry about the third question, and when I, in my turn, suggested that he, for his part, should allow me to put three questions to him, he suddenly discovered that the forward deck was quite cold in April and that he wanted to go down to the cabin to warm his feet.

The fact that I have retained this silly game of question and answer for nearly fifty years shows how deeply my self-consciousness had suffered from this man and how great my sense of triumph was, for he had often shown me a kind of malicious affability until he preferred to become an open enemy.

Two happy years now followed, and my heart is warm again within me when I think of them—years, not of foolishness, for there was too much of what was great, new, and worthy of experience which forced itself upon me, but years of realizing my strength, of happy prosperity, and only so far filled

with work that it did not interfere with one's amusements by night or by day.

Like a meadow in June in which the flowers stand so high that one need not stoop to pluck them, my youth spread out before me—good will, comradeship, and friendship, and last but not least love, promising love, wherever the eye turned. . . . I also had bad fits of conscience as well, but they only served as spice to give the sauce of life a secret flavor of unfettered freedom.

I had left the boarding house kept by my newly discovered relatives, as their delicate health could not stand the strain of my rapidly growing disorderliness. But I still visited them and always found a safe refuge in their home.

The boarding house to which I moved was one kept by the widow of a previous director of the Real-gymnasium, a Frau Tagmann, for boys and girls who were attending the better-class schools. Here lived together in peace and amity young men and maidens, and here the biblical injunction, "Children love one another," was faithfully observed—that is, as far as youths and young girls can love one another, shyly, innocently, fearful of betraying themselves, a love never followed by certainty and surrounded with a rose-colored veil, a diving into a sea of dreams and hopes which dissolved into nothing when one wanted to examine them.

There were two rooms allotted to the boys, in the smaller of which I lived with a room mate, a boy older than myself and also in the first class, but that of the Gymnasium. The other was filled with a rabble of youngsters, for whom there was usually a series of apple-pie beds when it was time to go to sleep.

Behind that came the girls' quarters, separated

from ours by a door which was kept permanently locked.

We had our meals together at one large family table. It was not very plenteous—on the contrary; but then, who could have satisfied so many hungry mouths? Besides, the food was eked out by hampers which arrived in unbroken succession, now for one, and now for another, and which succeeded in testing the truth of another biblical saying, "What are they among so many?" as satisfactorily as the miracle itself.

The conversation at table was less calculated to make us forget the shortages of the menu. It consisted for the most part in a not very pressing invitation on the part of the lady who kept the pension, "Please help yourselves," and in a modest refusal on our part, "Oh no, thank you!" just at the moment when our appetites had reached a point where they were perfectly prepared to have full justice done to them. And yet these meals in common raised us to the summit of our emotions, for then we sat in close proximity to our "flames" and might feed our eyes to satiety on the dearly beloved features which haunted our dreams by night.

I have said "we and us" all the time, but as a matter of fact I ought really to speak only of myself, for the inmates of the large dormitory were still far too young to have any understanding of the eternal feminine. My room mate, however, had a greater interest in real life—the kind of interest that begins with the waitress and does not by any means end with the attractions of the personnel of the kitchen.

He was able to point to a considerable number of successes in this direction, and the little house with the green-framed shining windows which we passed

with shy glances from the corner of our eyes, while the same enticing negligées were to be seen behind the tightly stretched green muslin curtains, had no longer any secrets for him.

And sometimes the youngsters from the next room would stand round him listening respectfully while he instructed them with the dignity of an unquestioned authority in the art of love as he had learned it from his experiences.

I, myself, felt a little heart stab while listening to these stories, for the fact that I had only a theoretical knowledge of these things was in itself shameful enough without his ending, as he often did, with a dig at my youthful innocence which was half scornful and half encouragement.

No, my friends, this is no joking matter, nor is it intended to be salacious, for there is many a young man who has felt himself for years to be an outcast because his manhood is stirring in him, and who must go on enduring his misery if he does not find a friend at the right time who gives rein to his own instincts coarsely, but healthily.

But my hour had not yet come, and whatever physiological impulses I might have were sublimated into sensations which were a blessing for my inner life, while they gave a supersensitiveness to my nerves which tripled all the emotions, all the joys and sorrows, all the fears and madnesses, of these years.

Especially mad pranks, for I was no longer the timid little wretch dragged into the game, as I used to be when I took part in the adventures of my friends. I was now a kind of ringleader in all dangerous games into which our thirst for life drove us.

We all knew that drinking was punished with expulsion, and it was sufficient to be seen at the open

door of an inn to find oneself involved in a very painful inquiry. But that did not prevent us two or three times a week, and certainly on Saturday, from forming a merry circle in some out of the way corner.

We did not, as most people seem to do, ape the customs of the university student. And so we were able to enjoy the fresh glow of our youth without being submitted to those stupid, meaningless, and hard-and-fast drinking customs which turn fresh and happy youths into cheeky slaves and clumsy despots. I shall have more to say about this later on.

About midnight, when we had reached the stage at which we felt like demigods, the real amusement of the evening, the beer prowl, began. We went round in a party from inn to inn, and from one boozing den to another, made love to the waitresses, and fought with the guests. If we came off best there usually followed a great reconciliation feast in which we fraternized with barbers' assistants and grocers' apprentices.

As at that time I often found it necessary to get myself shaved, it would happen that a day or so afterward the young gentleman who was attending to my beard would address me familiarly as "thou," and propose that he should come and visit me the next time he had an evening out, in my room. I was so embarrassed with my happiness over this new friendship that I could not find the courage to shut him up rudely, and, as he knew my address as well as his own he would turn up a short time later with a silver-mounted walking stick and freshly greased hair. But in the meantime I would have the sense to tell my room mate of this new misfortune, and, thanks to his intervention, my guest would be finding himself, very shortly afterward, enjoying the full benefit of the fresh air.

But our *rencontres* did not always end in sudden friendships. If we were particularly wild, then we adopted the old revolutionary maxim, "Blood must flow till honor is satisfied," and then it probably happened that the landlord would call in the police. It is true that the old policeman, Ploksties, knew us well, and if we gave him a glass of beer and a cigar, he didn't care about a breach of the peace. But it once happened that a new policeman unexpectedly turned up in the middle of one of our gory battles and placed us all under arrest. That was the end of the fun and the bold roysterers were suddenly turned into whimpering little dogs. We were able to come away with the satisfaction that we had beaten the other side, but our pleasure in such scrimmages was spoiled for a long time.

Besides, gentler amusements which were, of course, just as much forbidden, began to overcome the more masterful exhibitions of the animal within us.

Winter came on, and Herr du Plessis made his usual announcement to the pupils of the higher schools, and also to the more respectable youth of the business community, that his famous dancing classes would again open.

It was necessary to get permission from the director to take dancing lessons, and this was very unwillingly and seldom given, in view of the time which was lost from our school work, and later on it was made a dubious pleasure by the double severity which accompanied it.

As I was anyhow living in a wild whirlpool of broken regulations, it was not very difficult for me to undertake dancing lessons as another secret crime, of course running the danger of being expelled if I was discovered.

You young people who give yourselves so much pains to learn the tango and the intricacies of the shimmy, will scarcely be able to picture the intense ardor with which we learned the polka and competed with one another in the mastery of the Rheinländer. Those who were specially gifted with a taste for dancing even ventured so far as a "Galop with figures," and I must beg you not to smile if I confess that my curvetting diagonally right across the large hall of the Kasino was a performance which aroused the bitter envy of my fellow pupils. For the rest, there was always the beautiful old waltz, which like a cradle rocked us babies in the art of love, ravished by the longings of the heart and the desire of the flesh, on the soft cushions of our partners' young breasts.

It was customary for those among the parents of the girls who were learning to dance, who were accounted decent and wealthy enough, to give dances at their houses, which meant the "coming out" of their daughters and their first success in society. The better-class youths at the dancing class, and especially the youths in the first class, were always invited to such dances, and so I soon found my study table covered as closely with invitations as any lion of Berlin society during the season, and it might happen that on every one of the seven mornings which a week contains I changed straight from my evening clothes into my ordinary suit, without even glancing at my comfortable bed.

Human memory is proverbially ungrateful, and I have forgotten most of those dances. But one still remains as the acme of all earthly joys, and will be so until I die.

You youngsters, have you the faintest idea what Dekomin's confectionery shop was like? No, you

cannot have. You do not know in the least what a real confectioner's shop looked like up to 1914. But imagine everything that you have seen, envied, and eaten at Schilling's, Kranzler's, Rumpelmeyer's, or whatever the other paradises scattered about Germany may be called, enhanced immeasurably, nay, incredibly. Read my "Journey to Tilsit," which I have already mentioned. I have endeavored to describe it there, but, unfortunately, it cannot be described. And the daughter of this magic kingdom was the girl I liked dancing with best, and one day I was invited to her house. I remember the mountains of macaroons filled with some indefinable cream mixture and completely covered with a sugary curtain. I remember a certain cake which was covered with almond butter, such as I ate later on at Paris and smuggled over the frontier for a dear lady who was a friend of mine. I can remember dimly a thousand other sweet dishes for which we always seemed to be able to make room, although we ought to have long been replete with the pheasants, the turkeys, venison and rosy York ham, which were served with a mysterious purple sauce.

And besides this you must imagine dear, dear girls whose favorite one was, with whom one joked and was tender—the silly word "flirtation" did not exist then—until the morning warned us that we were not in the land of Cockaigne.

It is quite obvious that under these circumstances the work which ought to have been done for school was regarded as nonsense and rubbish. I employed my time in the less important classes in sleeping gently—as far as I could—behind the hand which was supporting my thoughtful brow. And even if I was overtaken by a blessed drowsiness in which the

strains of a waltz competed for mastery with Macaulay or the Henriade at important or even at critical moments, I somehow managed to scramble through.

But my home work was wretched and had to be replaced by bold extemporizations. This went well enough in the modern languages. But Latin still remained my weak subject, and a page of Sallust might have been Arabic, for all I knew it, had it not been for my crib. Our old Latin teacher, fortunately, made the work easy for us. There were always three boys put on to translate at every lesson, and as he followed the order of the class, it was possible to determine the day and even the moment at which anyone would be called upon to perform. I was determined that when it came my turn I would distinguish myself among my contemporaries and leave a name behind me. But the gods willed it differently.

I had got home at seven o'clock in the morning, and when I took my seat in the class at eight I had not yet given even a single glance at my crib. But the first lesson was Latin. An unheard-of catastrophe confronted me. What I had managed to achieve in the geography examination, which I have mentioned, I could scarcely expect to repeat, for Latin could not be learned in one night. The only chance of salvation that I saw lay in the few minutes of our morning service. If they did not help me, then the catastrophe must inevitably happen. Concealed behind the back of the boy in front of me, I endeavored to master as quickly as possible the portion which I should have to translate. But a kind of dizziness which prevented me from thinking and oppressed my brain, and which always threatened me at the decisive moments of my life, threw a red veil before my eyes and turned the letters into dancing spots.

The hymn was over. But I scarcely heard the amen of the prayer when suddenly my name resounded through the great hall. I stood up with a little gasp, and my book and crib fell to the floor.

My first thought was: "Now you are going to receive the due reward for your crimes. You are going to be brought to judgment before the whole school." Several voices from the master's desk told me to come forward. A lane was immediately opened for me, and stumbling half unconscious, half blind with horror, I walked down the whole length of the hall until I stood in front of the plinth on which the director awaited me. Sentence might now be passed on me, and it was passed pretty much in the following way:

"The Schiller Society gives every year the works of our greatest poets to the higher schools to be presented to their best pupils, and this year a prize has been allotted to the Realschule at Tilsit. The masters in council have decided to present to you this prize, with an inscription, as a reward for your earnest energy and your work, which has not been diminished in any fashion by youthful folly. Continue on the path which you have begun, so that you may continue to be a credit to our school."

He handed me four of the world-known gold-decorated cloth-bound books, shook me warmly by the hand, and I was at liberty to retire.

A quarter of an hour later the Latin master said:

"We shall now be pleased to hear from you, my dear Sudermann, how the foul Catiline behaved in such a desperate position, to use the words of our Sallust."

"Oh, good Heavens!" I thought. "What miracle could save me from this double shame?"

But the miracle was already there, and it was no fresh miracle, but just the result of the scene which had preceded.

"Well, well! I see," he continued, "we shall get nothing out of him to-day. Let us leave him intoxicated by his good fortune. Next." And so I was again saved.

But one day fate caught me up. Our director had a number of pretty daughters, one of whom was called Elise, whom, too, I had met at a number of dances and for whom I had shown a marked preference.

A poem of hers, which I had obtained by silent entreaty, lies by me in the "poetry album" which, with all the memories of that golden time, has led me faithfully through life, and brings up before me a soft, irregular face with rich red lips and passionate eyes. She, my secret flame, must somehow have said something about our occasional meetings, for one day when I had to give, somewhat unexpectedly, some account in the literature class, of the great epic poet, Schultze, and his "Bewitched Horse" (oh, I assure you that I knew my German poets), the director did not nod at me with applauding satisfaction, as he usually did, but said to me with a sudden flashing severity:

"Sudermann, stand up."

Then I knew that there was trouble brewing, for a boy in the first class was only told to stand up when he was in for a terrible telling off.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you not know that according to the school rules my consent is first necessary?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you not obtain it first?"

"Because I didn't think I should get it."

It was very lucky for me that I answered so brusquely and straightforwardly. A smile of ready comprehension shone for a moment on his face—the smile which we all loved—and although it was immediately swallowed up by severity again, I had seen it and a weight was lifted from my heart. I knew that at worst I should not be expelled.

"In this case I will refrain from making an example of you, for your straightforward confession has disarmed me, but I expect that you will make up for it by redoubled energy in your work."

"I will, sir," I answered.

May Heaven bless him in his grave for his breadth of mind, for if he had taken the matter seriously, my career would have been finished.

There is a period in one's youth when chastity becomes a crime. I had had trouble for some time in maintaining the bad reputation which I had so happily acquired. As a last resort I adopted the part of the *blasé* young man of the world for whom nothing is good enough, but this mask threatened to fall now and then, before the growing skepticism of my friends, especially as I could not get rid of the bad habits of blushing and stammering, if the cross-examination became too pressing.

I was particularly afflicted with shame in the presence of my room mate, who maintained that I was growing into an old maid. To rub this description of my character well in he had presented me at Christmas with a lapdog made of *papier maché*, and when one of the younger boys brought back a kind of cake known as a "stork's nest" to tea, he requested that it should be carefully concealed from me, as anything which had to do with a stork was calculated to give a terrible shock to my maiden modesty.

I saw that I had to put an end to this horrible situation, and one Saturday afternoon, in broad daylight, accompanied by the best wishes of my room mate and of two of the elder boys of the other room (the others had not been admitted into the secret), I made my painful way to the little house with the little mirrors on its green shutters, the picture of which had long afflicted my mind.

My heart was beating wildly, and I might have turned back at the last moment had it not been that, as I looked cautiously about me, I became aware that I was being carefully watched from the window of my room. There was now no possibility of retreat.

I knocked with a courage that defied death itself.

Two eyes that devoured every detail of my person peered through the lattice, and then the door was opened.

"Come right in, young gentleman," said the old woman who kept the door in the darkness of the hall. At night she used to shrill, "Hist! Hist!" if a manly footstep echoed down the stony street.

"Irma, Gertrude, and madame," she continued, have gone to a concert and coffee at Jakobsruh, but Elvira is at home."

Therewith she opened a door on the right-hand side of the passage. Seated at the window was a woman in white, half-open negligée, who at the first glance seemed to be rather motherly. Two watery blue eyes in a pretty, pale, but somewhat puffy face smiled an indifferent welcome to me, and then there was a little scream and a deep blush overspread the round blond face with the pleasant snub nose, and she ran out of the room.

I had a horrible sensation of having been refused.

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Was it perhaps because I was only a schoolboy, or was there another reason? Who could tell?

On the whatnot which supported the mirror stood a porcelain dog with gaping jaws, and later on I learned that it was here that the "presents" of the day were deposited, to be joyfully shared by all, as bringing luck. Over the sofa hung the pictures of the Emperor and Empress, and under them a framed proverb extolling the virtues of German womanhood.

I was becoming more and more scared with every moment, and I was already weighing the possibilities of creeping noiselessly out of the house, when the door opened and in rustled the motherly woman for whom I had been waiting, clothed in a sequin-covered ball dress.

"I just wanted to tog myself out a bit, my dear sir," she said with a distant and dignified air "for when one gets so few visitors, one must do something to show honor to them."

I did not know what to answer and my powers of speech dried up. I, who stood on terms of intimacy with half a dozen waitresses and who had had a tremendous flirtation a short while before with the blond Ida of the Reichsadler, behaved like a shy schoolboy, like little Hans Gehrt when the Frau Director spoke to him. I could have been no more embarrassed in the presence of a princess than I was in that of this harlot, who, besides, could not even speak correct German.

"Won't you make yourself comfortable?" she continued, seating herself on the sofa and spreading out the folds of her dress, like a fan.

I sat on a chair opposite her and put my cap down on the table. Her eyes became sentimental.

"Dearie me!" she said. "To think of getting to know you! Now who would have thought it?"

"Why me in particular?" I asked, in surprise. Could it be that my reputation as a man about town had preceded me?

"Oh, well, I see you passing morning, noon, and night. Lord in Heaven! where do you go with all those books? I suppose that you take them to your office."

She knew, of course, that I was at the school, but as she also knew that we were threatened with expulsion if caught visiting her house, she thought it better to seem stupid.

"And then you are always skating with pretty girls on the rink. Lord! what pretty girls they are!"

And then her eyes again became sentimental.

"And then I've seen you at the theater. . . . You're very fond of the theater, I suppose."

This time I assented, and with veracity.

"So am I. . . . Yes, I've seen 'Don Carlos' and so on. . . . What a nice girl Princess Eboli is! Don't you think so?"

"Oh, certainly I do!"

"I'm very fond of reading books. . . . Yes, *The Robbers* and so on. . . . I've seen that, too . . . and *Cabal and Love*, but I've only read that. . . . Oh, that poor Luise is such a nice girl! . . . I can also make lemonade. . . . I'm all for sweet things."

In this style we went on discussing German literature. Many a feminine figure who was dear to me maintained her position under her judgment as a "nice girl," and every time those large, pale-blue eyes were filled with the same sentimental moisture.

In the garden at home, among the gay flower beds which gratefully responded to my mother's care

under the shade of lilacs and cherry trees, there was a white seat, set close up against the neighbor's fence and not far from the road. And here, with the aid of a tarpaulin and a kitchen table, I established my headquarters.

And I was so athirst for knowledge and full of a desire to work, that even the long June days were not long enough to enable me to satisfy them. And when the letters began to be blurred, about ten in the evening, then I would go off to the churchyard, stretch myself on some stranger's seat—for we then had no burial place of our own—and dream and philosophize and learn fear, or rather, not to be afraid, for to lie between two graves at midnight was, after all, a test of nerves.

I also wrote a short story about that time—or rather, an *Arabeske* as I called it, for that seemed to me to be a higher type of literature—called "What the wind whispers," and if I look at it again to-day, I am even more surprised at the excess of emotion which, so far as my memory serves, breathed in that unimportant little picture, than I am at the awkwardness of my style.

My whole existence was one long hymn, a surge of emotions which passed from one ecstasy to another, but at the same time it was coupled with a very practical desire to get on, and everything I got out of the books which I devoured went in its entirety to feed the stream of associations.

I didn't think it necessary to cram for my leaving-certificate examination, and so I felt at liberty to indulge in literature, philosophy, and the science of religion (Strauss and Renan were modern then) without my conscience reproaching me.

It was during this happy ripening stage that I had

an experience which shook me to the depths of my being.

A friend of the family had to purchase a property, whether for himself—he shall remain nameless—or not I don't remember, and as I was fairly popular then in the neighborhood, I was not surprised when he stopped before our door and suggested that I should accompany him. He told me to bring a warm coat with me, as we should probably spend most of the night on the way. And so we started.

Ten, fifteen, twenty miles we drove, through places which I only knew by hearsay and which seemed to me as strange as if they had been on the moon.

At last, about teatime, we landed up at a fine country house, surrounded by dark-red barns and stables. The house itself, one-storied, shone snow white and hospitable through its vine trellises.

The owner, an elderly, broad, bearded giant, stood at the front door with his dogs to welcome us. When the gentlemen had shaken hands and my friend was looking around him with a measuring eye, which showed his satisfaction all too plainly, the owner said, with a mocking laugh:

"I suppose you think that *this* is for sale. No, my friend, you won't get your hands on to this pretty little place; but the other place is very nice, too, only it will take us a few hours to get there."

"As we have been sitting cramped in the carriage since nine this morning, that prospect is not very attractive to me and still less so to this young man," said my friend, pointing to me. But I would have driven to the end of the world, so eager I was for new experiences.

"The youngster can stay here," said the owner, giving me his hand, "but you must come with me.

Come in and have coffee while the horses are being put in."

Therewith he led the way into the semitwilight of the hall, where a maid in a brightly colored bodice relieved me of my hat and coat. He said a few words in Lithuanian, whereupon she nodded at me and bade me follow her.

We went first up a flight of wooden stairs to a many-cornered loft which smelled of smoke and mice, and then into a narrow white room before the windows of which shimmered the green gold of lime trees drenched in sunshine. The young maid, whose hair, tied up with red and blue ribbons, towered like a crown over her forehead, hung up my hat and coat and smiled at me expectantly.

"What am I to do now?" I asked.

"You are to come to coffee," she answered, and as she remained standing quietly at my approach, I took her in my arms and kissed her by way of toll.

Downstairs, I was shown into a room flooded with light and like a hall, almost. The samovar was sending up a cloud of steam into the rays of sunshine and a woman's hand was outstretched to me.

The woman to whom it belonged stood, a dark figure woven about with light, between the sun and myself, so that I could not see what she was like. It was only when she turned to the two men that I saw she had an oval face, still quite young, framed in brown waving curls, which, as if they were composed of shining snakes entwined, surrounded her face down to her throat. Then, too, I saw a pair of small, dark, deep-shaded eyes the shadows of which reached nearly to her temples, which smiled with welcome to me in my youthful bashfulness.

There were fresh cakes which she herself laid with

a pair of silver tongs on my plate, and thereafter kümmel from Mittau out of a bottle the neck of which glinted with thick sugar crystals.

And then the carriage was announced.

"Well, my boy," said the owner of the house, "will you drive with us, or not?"

"Oh, Lord!" thought I, "let me stay here."

But no help was necessary, for my very delay in answering sufficed to bring about a decision.

"Very good," said he. "Then stay here and keep my wife company. It will be tiring enough, anyway, bumping over the fields."

And so they drove off.

"Let us go into the garden for a little," said the lady of the house, replacing the handkerchief which she had waved after the carriage. And so we passed into the garden.

"Now you must begin the conversation," she said.

I ought to say I was an expert at making conversation. That I knew, and not only from the dancing lessons. But to-day I couldn't think of anything at all.

By a lucky chance, however, there stood in the middle of a grass plot behind the house a banana tree shooting its tattered medley of leaves into the air. I told her that I had never known before that such a splendid tropical plant could grow in our cold north-eastern climate.

"We cut it back in autumn," she replied, "put the roots and stump away in the cellar, and in the spring it comes to life again, just as human beings do."

I told her that it was in winter more particularly that I spent a double life.

"Yes, you, perhaps," she replied, "but here it is very lonely."

And then she said that she, too, had been to school at Tilsit once, and later on had even had a year at a school at Lausanne to acquire a final polish.

"But now I don't need it any more," she added, with a shrug of her shoulders, "for here we simply go to seed."

This was, of course, the point at which I ought to have comforted her, but I didn't dare do so. The more she opened her heart the more embarrassed I became. It was as if her confidences laid fetters on my soul and closed my mouth with anxious warnings.

So the conversation gradually came to a standstill again. I hemmed and hawed, but, seek as I might, I found nothing, no topic which could start things moving again.

She quickened her pace, and I trotted behind her like a little dog, with my heart in my mouth, for I thought that, as I had nothing to say, she thought it was not worth while being polite enough to walk beside me. By the side of a swampy pool, around which lay the ruins of a stone edging, she halted.

"A young serving girl threw herself in here once," she said. "Don't you think she acted very wisely?"

"That all depends," replied I. I could think of nothing better to say, and I also laughed foolishly.

She too laughed—laughed as heartily as if I had made a good joke. Then she went on again.

There lay in front of us in the fiery red of approaching night a wide stretch of meadow on which horses and young cattle were chasing one another in ever-changing droves.

"How beautiful it is!" I exclaimed, for the sake of saying something.

"It all depends," she replied—just as I had done, I thought. "She is mocking at you already."

Then we turned round and walked back to the house.

"I wish this torment were at an end," I thought to myself, while the pauses in the conversation grew longer and longer. I wanted to run away, but that would scarcely do, and so I trotted idiotically beside her and watched the little stones which leaped before us out of the loose gravel.

It seemed as if she had read my thoughts, for when we reached the steps of the garden terrace she reached out her hand as though she were saying good-by.

"I must leave you alone now," she said, "for I have to go to see about supper, and perhaps the gentlemen will have come back by then."

This seemed to me to be my final dismissal, for as soon as the two men returned, I would again become a person of no importance. So I tortured myself with my stupidity to such an extent that I could have cried and writhed on the ground. I walked up and down continually from the garden to the drawing-room and from the drawing-room back to the garden for about two hours, repeating continually, "How beautiful that is!" But if anyone had asked me what I found so beautiful I should not have known what to answer. A couple of dogs turned up and trotted faithfully behind me. As I did not know their names, I gave them the first which occurred to me, but they obeyed, all the same.

And suddenly, just as it was almost dark, they dashed away from me through the garden gate to meet a man on horseback who was approaching the house at a gallop. A half-grown youth who had fastened spurs to his naked feet approached. He told the servants that he wished to speak to the lady of the house, and when she appeared at the door he

told her that the master had said that they could not finish the inspection to-day, and asked her to send them out blankets and a bottle of rum for the evening grog.

Cold shivers ran through me. If I was to be left alone to have supper with her, then the torture of not being able to speak would fall upon me with fresh bitterness. I clung to the rails of the garden fence, through which I had poked my nose so as to see more closely what was happening, and considered whether I had not better ask for a horse, so that I could follow the others under the guidance of the youth. But she had already gone in without having looked around for me.

After a while a servant girl appeared—the same that I had kissed—gave the youth, who was still mounted, a bundle, and when he had dashed off again she turned toward the garden to the place where I was watching from behind the fence.

"Madam wishes me to tell you that supper is served," she whispered, with downcast eyes, and I felt myself ashamed in her presence, as she was in mine.

When I entered the garden room with a beating heart, it had already become dusk, so that I could scarcely see my hostess. She gave me her hand and said, pointing to the hanging lamp:

"I am afraid that there is no petroleum in the lamp, for we usually eat by daylight. Would you prefer me to send for lights or shall we eat in the dark?"

"Oh, let us eat in the dark!" I exclaimed. For I hoped that thus I should best be able to master my embarrassment.

"Very good," she said, "and when you can no longer find the way to your mouth, then just let me

know and I will feed you." I had a sudden sense of relief, for if she could joke so freely with me, then it seemed to me impossible that she should despise me; but that did not help me to find something to talk about.

And then I noticed that I was faint with hunger, for I had not had anything proper to eat the whole day long.

She placed the half of a young chicken on my plate, and a mountain of salad as well, which was almost held together by thick cream. She also gave me a red wine which went to my head after the first gulp.

And suddenly my embarrassment passed. I asked her with a laugh whether she could possibly endure such a stupid person any longer, and what she had thought when I had been so idiotic that afternoon.

"I will tell you," she replied, quite seriously. "I was afraid that I was boring you."

"You boring me?" I almost screamed. "But how could you possibly think such a thing?"

"That is quite easy," she replied, "for I am only a simple country bumpkin."

"You—you—you—" I could go no further.

"Now don't." She interrupted my stammering sentence and laid her hand on mine to check me.

"Please don't flatter me. I shall not believe you."

This gave me still more courage. I told her that a woman had never been so kind to me before in my life, and in no other woman in my life had I had so much confidence. But I had not allowed myself to express this in words. And if she would permit it I should like best of all to empty out my whole heart to her.

"Please do so," she said, leaning back in her chair. "I should like to hear it."

Then the last dam of restraint in me broke. That which I had never ventured to confess to any other human being, not even to my mother, I could not help pouring out unreservedly to this stranger whom I could only see as a dim shadow.

I wanted to become a poet, a poet like Goethe or Schiller, but as that was not a trade which one could learn, I should be obliged to find some indifferent means of earning my daily bread. And that, too, was not so simple, for I had no money and would never get any. It is true that I would gladly starve, but it was not worth while living if one were to end up as schoolmaster, a career of which I had a horror. At the Realgymnasium we only had a chance of learning the natural sciences and modern languages. I had, I confessed, a tremendous interest in the natural sciences, but they would finally lead me so far away from my poetry that I should never be able to find the way back. As far as modern languages went, they might cease to exist so far as I was concerned, but they always gave me the possibility of busying myself with their various literatures, which again brought me somewhat closer to poesy, and that was the one thing which mattered.

All this I told her, and meanwhile drank the heavy red wine in long, imprudent draughts. I was so full of gratitude for the fact that I was able to express myself, that to throw myself in the dust before her and kiss her feet would have pleased me best.

We fell silent. I breathed heavily and shortly, and when I held my breath, then I could hear her breathing, too.

"So you want to be a poet?" she said, and arose.

"It is a mad dream, and nothing more, but my one comfort is this, that so many another mad dream in

my life has come true. So perhaps this, too, may some day prove true.

"Well, everyone has his wishes," she said. "You want to be a poet and I want to have a little baby."

"Only your wish is not so impossible," I replied.

"Perhaps—perhaps it is. However—" She sighed and turned toward the open garden door. Now at last I could see her face again in the dim light of the summer night. Her fine nostrils twitched, and her wide-open shadowy eyes stared up to the stars. Then she bent them smilingly toward the ground again.

"I will carry the strawberries," she said; "you take the wine, and then we can sit out on the terrace." And so we did. We ate the strawberries, which were also embedded in thick cream, and drank the wine, every draught of which sent a fresh stream of blood through my arteries. My cheeks were burning and my blood was pulsing strongly all over my body.

"You will have a hard life," I heard my new friend say, "and you yourself will make it even harder. But that does not matter, for women will always like you."

I was startled. When had any woman ever liked me? When had I ever thought that a woman could like me? And that I said to her.

"Oh, well, perhaps the girls for the present," she replied, smiling, "and I suppose that you have already found out that it is so."

I thought of Klara Hornig, of Hedwig Tagmann, of Magda Tagmann, of Elise Koch, and of all the others whom I had loved one after another. But although I had always met with love in return, a real and genuine love, who could be sure that it was so? And that also I told her. A slight sign of excitement, which I felt rather than saw, had shown itself in her features while she looked at me scrutinizingly from her half-

closed shadowy eyes. And then she suddenly got up. "I have a headache," she said, "and must go to bed. I will ring for the girl to take you to your room. Good night."

I sat there as if I had been felled with an ax. I took her outstretched hand, which she withdrew quickly from the warm pressure of mine, and then suddenly she had disappeared.

The young girl with the crown of blond hair appeared with a candle in her hand, and stood waiting for me at the open glass door. I should have preferred to dash off into the darkness of the garden to cool off the excited feelings which filled my heart. But I had not courage enough to do so, so followed her obediently up the creaking wooden stairs, over the paved floor of the loft, into the gable room in which a bat, which had lost its way, flitted here and there, knocking against the dilapidated wallpaper.

The girl put the candle on the table, and without vouchsafing me a glance proceeded to drive out the terrified animal.

But the room was too narrow to allow of her passing by me without touching me gently, and when I felt that sweet scent of country air which this child of nature carried around her, a kind of madness seized upon me. I pulled her toward me, half unconsciously, and covered her cheeks and throat with kisses. She offered a desperate resistance. But women will do that always, even if they are at heart willing enough.

"I must go downstairs," she whispered, imploringly.

"Then come back again," I begged her in my turn.

She said neither yes or no. She laughed aloud, and then slipped out of the room.

She had scarcely gone when I was filled with compunction. How base I was. I was not only abusing

the hospitality of a strange house disgracefully, but I was also behaving like a monster toward the noble, high-minded, and generous woman whose home it was, who had honored me with her confidence, and who had so graciously received my own secret thoughts.

I walked up and down like a man out of his senses. If the blond maid should now really return, would I have the strength to tell her to go her way?

At times I stopped and listened. Nothing stirred in the house and the last light appeared to have been extinguished. At any rate, the side which lay toward the garden was buried in darkness, as well as the wing which contained the servants' quarters and which adjoined it.

Then I started walking up and down again. The bat and I raced up and down as if for a wager. Up and down, up and down—I do not know for certain how long—for hours—for an eternity.

A voice within me full of painful resignation told me, "She cannot possibly come now," and another answered, "God be thanked that she cannot come."

But still I listened again and again, and again and again I marched up and down. The bat had ceased to flutter about, but I could not rest.

But suddenly—it may have been two o'clock in the morning—it seemed to me that I heard far below me a gentle creaking on the stair, which increased, and then ceased again. I listened, but could hear nothing, until after a while, during which I had been wandering up and down again, I heard the creaking again. But this time it lasted longer and did not stop until it reached the top.

She was coming, then; she was actually coming! "Bolt the door," said a voice within me, "that the daylight may not take away from you the picture of

the ideal woman which has been given you and which is to lead you henceforth through your life."

But I found that I could not raise my hand to the bolt. And then there was again silence. It was as if everything which lured me to love, to sin, and to adventure had been dissolved into night and silence. I still listened for a while, my ear pressed to the key-hole, and then I began to walk up and down again, while the bat again flitted along the walls and against the ceiling. Then when I stopped for a moment, close to the door, I thought I heard a rustling out there in the passage, not louder than the scampering of a mouse, but loud enough to let me know that I was no longer alone up here. I tore to the open door. There stood in front of me, scarcely five steps away, a candle in her hand, gazing at me with gloomy eyes, the lady of the house. I stepped back with a cry. As though it came from a far distance, I heard her voice hard and condemning as she said:

"If you are going to walk up and down all night, you might at least take your boots off. . . . I would have sent the girl up to you a long time ago, but they all sleep in the servants' quarters. So, finally, I have come up myself."

"I beg your pardon," I stammered. "I never thought of that." I must have looked so much like a miserable and repentant sinner, in saying so, as to move her to compassion, for the shadow of a friendly smile flitted over her face and she continued in a gentle tone.

"Well, well, it is not daylight yet and we shall still have time to get enough sleep. But now to go to bed, my dear boy."

When I heard her say "my dear boy" the tension within me, which had dominated my being for hours,

sweet, tormenting, and full of presentiment, snapped. I threw myself on one of the two chairs standing in front of the table, laid my head on my folded arms, and wept bitterly.

I heard the door close, and then footsteps slowly approaching me. Then I felt a hand laid heavily on my head and was aware of hot tears falling on my neck.

"Oh, God!" I thought, "she, too, is weeping, weeping over my sorrows."

And then she seated herself near me, on the other chair, leaned her head on my head, and the odorous tangle of her loosened curls lay against my right cheek.

"Take care," I said, still sobbing, "there is a bat in the room."

"It has got out," she replied, sobbing in her turn. And I slipped my hand round her neck.

In the morning I awoke out of blissful unconsciousness to find the maid, with a bashful smile, standing in the open door. It then occurred to me that perhaps she, too, had crept up to my room later on, and fresh terror made my blood run cold.

"The gentlemen have come back," she said, "and you must get dressed quickly please, as your friend wants to get off."

I came down to meet their laughing greetings. But the lady of the house excused herself. She had a headache.

I suffered long and deeply from this experience.

I knew from novels that people can be untrue to their marriage vows, but that, after a divorce had been obtained, those interested either married or took flight together and roamed over the wide, wide world.

But I was not yet seventeen and all the money I possessed would only take me as far as Tilsit.

I, of course, could not write to her—except for the

ordinary letter of thanks—but I looked for a letter by every post, in which I expected her to demand that I should take up the burden of my responsibilities and in which she placed her destiny in my hands.

But that letter never came.

Thereafter I began to look at the women around me with different—and less respectful—eyes.

The veiled mysteries, the threshold of which one avoided involuntarily, had opened their doors. But within them there was no longer a shrouded picture of Isis, to touch the veil of which meant certain death, but a woman of flesh and blood, of like passions with oneself.

It needed another experience—an experience which cut still deeper—to teach me the necessary respect for woman and her mission on earth.

But it was six years before that happened.

CHAPTER X

THE FAREWELL ORATION

IN the early autumn I obtained the work of arranging and cataloguing the library of a Gymnasium master who had recently died. This I owed to the recommendation of the director, who took a fatherly interest in increasing my pocket money by giving me opportunities for coaching and other minor jobs.

My fee was four thalers and a certain number of books which I was to choose myself.

I flung myself at this congenial task with fiery zeal, after school hours, and rooted about among the disorderly shelves as much as I liked until darkness drove me from the house.

I was to have finished the job by the Michaelmas holidays, and so I had no time to lose. But a misfortune came across my path which had a deep effect on my emotional life.

I was by now the senior member of our boarding house and had a certain measure of responsibility for the small boys in the next room, which became more or less of a reality when I had to settle a dispute, or prevent them from breaking bounds, or if I noticed that one of them was unwell.

And so it happened one morning that little Hans Gehrt, a nice little boy in the fifth class, who went his way quietly and dutifully, came into my room before school began and said to me:

"I feel ill."

I had a look at him. His face was grey and sunken, and while he was talking to me he held on to the edge of the table. So I got him back to bed and asked the boarding house lady to look after him.

When I came back from school at noon I ran across the doctor. He said that it was nothing serious, only a slight case of European cholera, which would be all right in a few days. But the little lad cared nothing for the doctor's prophecies and went from bad to worse.

We sat round his bed and tried to cheer him up, but he made but little response to our efforts and said he wanted to sleep. But when the hanging lamp was lit he said that everything was so dark. His chin sank a little toward his chest and he was dead.

Well, there we sat around him, and most of us, I suppose, thought it was a bad joke and that he would presently come to life again, but he refused to do us that favor. The doctor, who was summoned again in haste, said that it was probably a case of Asiatic cholera and that we ought to carry out the necessary measures for disinfection and leave the rooms as soon as possible.

The Frau Director lost her head, and when the door leading to the girls' room was opened there was the sound of loud sobbing in various keys.

I had to take charge of all the younger boys. But there was neither train nor steamer until the next morning and the September nights were long. The idea of going to a hotel with my brood did not occur to me, for I could not imagine that there was enough money in the world to pay for such an extravagance.

Consequently, there was nothing for it but to make a beer prowl, or rather a spirits prowl, for beer is proverbially no prophylactic against cholera.

I took one last look at the thin little face, pale against its white pillows, placed a piece of calcium chloride on the gaping lips as a preliminary to the regular work of disinfection, and departed, pleased with this careful and professional procedure, with my charges, consisting of five or six boys.

First of all I took them to our usual Saturday-evening joint, where I felt more or less at home. The guests, waiters, and, above all, mine host, were highly astonished, but when I explained our sad predicament we were met with a sympathetic friendliness. It is true that the back room on which I had reckoned was engaged, but a corner was cleared for us and presently every urchin had steaming before him that sovereign remedy for cholera—and for all other evils—a stiff glass of grog.

They drank it up and suddenly became very merry. It did not matter how seriously I talked to them about the earnestness of the situation, they giggled and pinched one another and began to use the match stands, which were, unfortunately, full, to annoy the other guests. I saw immediately that I was making a poor début as a pedagogue, and as the situation threatened to become impossible I paid up and beat a hasty retreat.

At the next two inns we were thrown out at once. The night was cold and misty and the smallest boys declared that they were tired and wanted to go to bed.

In my perplexity I bethought me of the blond Ida who had always proved a true friend to me. It was true that the Reichsadler, where she was employed as waitress, did not enjoy too savory a reputation, but I knew that if I appealed to her well-tried kindness of heart, she would not leave me in the lurch.

The Reichsadler was very full. Full of blue smoke

(you could have cut the atmosphere with a knife), noise, and drunks, coupled with erotic impulses in full blast.

"Heaven help me!" cried the blond Ida, disentangling herself from the customers who were trying to put their arms round her waist, "we are going to be turned into an infants' school."

I crossed over to her quickly and explained to her in a whisper what had driven me to her, and begged her to help me.

"Poor little boys!" she exclaimed, full of tearful kindliness. "Come in here for the moment."

Therewith she opened the door leading to a courtyard. It was a long time before she came back and said that the coast was clear. I had listened to the voice of my friend scolding and storming as though she were the Supreme Judge on Judgment Day. I had heard the drunken growls die out, and when the door was opened to us again we were confronted with emptiness shimmering in a blue haze.

"Now I can look after you," she said, beaming with a kindly, motherly smile. "The kitchen has been shut this long while, but I can give you some hot sausages or beefsteak tartare and all my love."

But my charges were only tired, and so each got a seat as soft as his bed, the hanging lamp was turned down, and so we sat quietly until the morning. But the blond Ida found no rest. She went from one little boy to another, stroked him and looked after him, and showed no end of sympathy. Finally I pulled her over to myself and made her sit down. She laid her head tenderly on my shoulder and whispered:

"Oh, Lord! I am so happy with the little boys!" And she, too, went to sleep.

I do not know how we got out in the morning and began our journey. The first thing that I remember is being on the deck of the great steamer which was taking me down the river Memel to Russ, which was not far from my home. But I could only stay there for a few days. The work which I had undertaken haunted me day and night, and finally I said to myself:

"Well, happen what may, you must go back." I naturally found my boarding house almost deserted. The daughters of the house, my late "flames," had taken refuge in the country, but the Frau Director still held her own bravely against the pestilence which called for new victims daily above and below.

We were informed that, with the exception of this one house, the whole town had been spared. I was very much pleased with my heroism. The Great Napoleon, who, as Gros's picture in the Louvre shows us, placed his finger in the wounds of a pestilence-stricken soldier, was nothing compared to me, and when my school fellows made a wide détour around me in the street, I laughed them to scorn.

The catalogue had to be finished quickly under these circumstances. I thought with joy of the four thalers and also of the books which I was to choose. But when I came back to the lonely rooms in the evening and hid my head under the blankets, there were gruesome noises like a death rattle, or like the heavy feet of the undertakers carrying out coffins which rang in my ears and made me feel afraid.

Yes, you have to learn to be a hero.

Winter came on. The examination for the leaving certificate loomed up closely, and still nothing had been settled about my future.

"Leave it to me," said my mother; "perhaps I can manage it."

That she was endeavoring to do so was proven to me during the Christmas holidays by the scowling looks of my father, who on many a day passed me by without vouchsafing me a word.

His business was going badly. He was growing old and sickly, and, although my second brother had taken the main weight of the physical work on to his shoulders, his worries about what the future might bring weighed all the more heavily on him.

A good example of how miserable our circumstances were is the following: My father, who was standing in front of the hot stove on Christmas morning, burned a hole in the new trousers which had been given him. He burst into bitter weeping on account of this fresh loss which fortune had brought him.

It was a heartbreaking spectacle to see so hard a man crying tears over such a trifle, and if I have ever felt inclined to reproach him in my heart I have always thought of this incident.

The village tailor Patzel had meanwhile carried out my instructions to the last detail, and to complete the impression that I was a carefully dressed man of the world, I carried a cigar case in the left breast pocket of my English-cut jacket. I had received the case as a present for helping a person out of some difficulty a short time before. It was adorned with carved ivory plaques, and these, with its red morocco leather, seemed to me the summit of all possible refinement.

And so I experienced the triumph of sitting in the inn with a stranger who was a member of the Lithuania Landsmannschaft and of hearing him, after a short survey of my appearance, put the envious question:

"Well, you, I suppose, will join the Normannen, won't you?" Anyone who knows that the Normannen mean as much at Königsberg as the Preussen at Bonn

and the Saxo-Borussen at Heidelberg will be able to understand what that meant to me. And I, meanwhile, poor devil, had not even an idea how I should be able to meet my first month's bill.

The gutters of the roofs began to drip again and the February sun began to shine with its incredible laughter, and when it began to freeze in the evening, as if we were at the North Pole, then a joyous presentiment within told me, "Nothing more can happen to you."

Under the influence of this presentiment I went into my examination as if I were going to a party, and in my audacity I felt myself so safe that I ventured to get my French essay hurried through by twelve o'clock, because at five minutes past there was going to be a sleigh waiting for me, which was going to take me with two dear little girls off to a dance twenty miles away.

Finally, however, I nearly came to grief over the physics examination. One of the questions ran, "On what day during the spring does perpetual twilight begin in the latitude of Tilsit"? I calculated and calculated, but the net result was always the 4th of May. That seemed to me impossible, because in May it was almost pitch dark by ten o'clock. One hour passed, and then another, and I began to lose my head. There were still four other questions which it was impossible to answer without a clear head. In my extreme necessity I passed a slip of paper over to Gustav Schulz on which was written: "Can the 4th of May be right?" and I received the answer back, "It is right."

Then my head cleared suddenly, and the other questions were mere child's play.

Although I was still uncertain as to the results of my work, I was one day summoned to the director, who said to me:

"The oral examination will come on somewhat later and school will close immediately after that. So in any case be prepared to give us the final oration."

When I told the class of this new honor, they all envied me, and even the virtuous Gustav Schulz gave me a look of admiration, although he was by far the best scholar there.

Long before the great day could come the text of my farewell oration had been given to the director for his approval, and was passed by him with smiling approval. Only one question remained to be settled, "Shall I shave off my mustache or not?" The school inspector who always took the examinations at Tilsit was said to be a ferocious enemy of all hair on the face, and rumor had it that nobody had ever passed the examination who had the impudence to enter it wearing the down of his youthful growth.

But mine was no longer down. On the contrary, a well-grown, neatly curled mustache, attended to perpetually with two narrow brushes, decorated my upper lip. If I was to enter the presence of the school inspector with it, it would be a challenge which might easily be answered by a catastrophe. My weak point was still Latin, and the dates of the Salian Franks and of the French Henris are things which nobody can possibly remember.

Well, all the same I risked it. Anyone who has a farewell oration in his pocket, as guarantee, need not worry about other people's prejudices.

"I do hope you will pull it off," said Gustav Schulz, with some trepidation, as we went into the classroom to meet our hour of destiny. And another schoolmate who lived in the neighborhood of the school, even offered to bring me a pair of scissors.

"No matter, we will risk it," I answered, recklessly.

Then the school porter knocked at the door and summoned us to the presence.

There they sat, all our friends and torturers—and in their midst a stranger, clean shaven, yes, of course clean shaven, who, as soon as I appeared, fixed me with his eye and appeared to be able to look at no one else.

Our names were called in their order, but he seemed to pay no attention to them. The order in which the various subjects were to be taken was laid before him, but it did not seem to interest him. He nodded absent-mindedly, and meanwhile he regarded me with the hypnotic gaze of a snake fascinating a bird, and I could see the saliva gathering in his mouth with which to cover me previous to swallowing me.

The director took up a sheet of paper and read it aloud in due form, "The following are excused from the oral examination": Schulz, Engel, then two names which I have forgotten, and then—mine.

"I congratulate you in the name of the school inspector and of those of the council of masters. You may leave the room."

We came forward and made our bows.

I then remarked that an expression of pained astonishment passed over the face of the school inspector, and, as I turned once more at the door, I saw his eyes fixed on me with an expression of hopeless longing.

I was lucky enough to have escaped this Shylock, but later on, when I appeared on the stage with the famous "Sudermann beard," his colleagues, the theatrical critics, revenged themselves by taking more than his pound of flesh from my body.

Now began a period of great rejoicing and high celebration. Many of us men have experienced the

like, but few have been in the pleasant position of strutting through the streets and banquet halls with a beautiful little round cap, grass green in color and embroidered in gold, on the top of their curls. Yes, in those days we still wore curls.

That which to-day seems a modest passage from a narrow sphere to a wider world was in those days a great event, an occasion for great celebration, a coronation, a climbing of Parnassus.

After seven nights of revelry, the day at last dawned which was to deliver me forever from the narrow limits of school life.

My mother had come to Tilsit to be present at the leaving ceremonies, the central point of which was, of course, to be my speech.

I cannot say that I suffered from stage fever. The self-possession which I have since experienced when I have been face to face with a crowd, whether on the stage or at a political meeting, descended on me as a blessing for the first time. Besides, I had a roll of manuscript which I could pull out of my pocket if need be.

Well, my deeply respected readers, it was a great speech. All that I had had simmering in my German compositions for five years was now poured out on humanity in search of salvation. Longing for life, the fears of the world, love of home, and the fierce desire to wander abroad, fury over those who only want to push themselves forward, and a fanatical desire for martyrdom, everything which is embraced in that convenient foreign word "idealism," which means something different to everyone from divinity down to a woolen shirt, was poured out on the devoted heads of my audience in a series of confused pictures and heated emotional phrases.

My voice had had plenty of training in the class exercises and I was master of the whole register from the thunder of righteous wrath down to the flutelike tones of heartbreaking emotion.

Finally everybody was reduced to tears, myself not least.

Then came congratulations without end, and a glance from my mother, full of pride, which sent thrills of happiness through my being.

Just before Easter, those happy days closed their doors forever behind me and the post wagon crunched its way through heavy snowdrifts and over the bridge of boats across the river Memel.

I leaned back on the cushions, puffed up with joyful pride, my mind full of pictures which filled me with hope and fear.

I thought that when mother gave her account of the great events, of my triumphs, of the strangers who had surrounded me and pressed my hand, then, I thought, my father would have some premonition of my future greatness and give up his objections to my continuing my studies. Would he not be prepared to lay down his last penny to pave the way to those heights which would finally benefit the whole family? And finally, finally, I might hope that I had brought him to my way of thinking, when I stood flushed with my first victory and full of happy confidence before him.

But the more impatient I became to meet him, the longer the journey lasted. We started at nine in the morning and I should have been at home by coffee time, but when night fell we were stuck fast in a dark wood and had spades thrust into our hands to help to dig the wagon out of a deep snowdrift. It was not until midnight that the post wagon stopped at last

before my home. The shutters were closed and everybody seemed to be asleep.

I knocked at the door, and my mother came to meet me with anxious eyes. There was no greeting, no welcome, no smile, only fear, anxiety, and again fear.

Then my father emerged.

I can see him still, the fists clenched and a savage bitterness in his outjutting jaw.

He wanted to know where I had been all this time. The other schoolboys had been back for over a week, and he wanted to know if I thought that he was going to stand for such a lottery any longer. Then he had heard that I wanted to go to the university to give full rein to my exaggerated sense of my own importance and my desire to better myself, whereas I ought to realize that my fitting station was at the best that of a post-office official, for I was only the son of poor but respectable people, and if that was not possible, then some other middle-class career as an official, where I would soon be on my own feet. But I might go to the university, of course, if I could only tell him who was going to pay for it, or I might do anything else, but on the same terms. At any rate, I should never get another farthing from him.

I had to listen to this and to much else, and I realized with a shock that we should never understand each other and never forgive each other. I left the supper, which my mother had prepared in honor of the occasion, untasted and slipped off to my gable room so as to be able to cry out my feelings. Later she brought me up a sandwich in one hand, bearing the lamp in the other. And she too cried, but she also comforted me.

"Let it be, my little lad; he will recover his temper and we will push it through."

And we *pushed it through.*

CHAPTER XI

THE HALL OF REJOICING

THE Hall of Rejoicing—as a matter of fact, its real name was Jubilee Hall.

You descended a large number of steps until you came to an immense room set aside for festivities, and then, just before you came to the door of the hall, you ascended two steps into a smaller room on the side, narrow, long, and pinched into a rectangle.

That was the real hall of rejoicing or of joy, for it was there that the Landsmannschaft *Littuania* held its *Kneipe*, or beer evenings, a society to which by tradition all Freshmen who came from the Northeast corner of East Prussia, and essayed to study at Königsberg University, belonged.

It should be remarked that it is to be assumed that I wished to join the association.

Well, as a matter of fact, I had no right to join it. How could I? My father had promised, after a great deal of pressure and pleading, to pay the expenses of one summer session. The gods alone knew what would happen to me thereafter.

I was dragged into the business—whether owing to weakness, or to ignorance, or to curiosity, how can I tell you. At any rate, I thought that I could have a look at the thing, without its costing me anything.

But the ceremonial respect with which I was received, even at the door, gave me an immediate sense of its being my natural *métier*. And then I was given a place of honor at the beer table, not very far

from the chairman. He was a medical student in his last year and was called Neiss I, and I soon discovered that I was involved in a conversation which went to the bottom of things, a conversation which dealt with what was really valuable in a man, which went farther—into the history of the idea of salvation, which also dealt with the incongruity of unproved philosophies; in short, I found myself involved in all possible themes which great thinkers delight to discuss at a symposium, when they want to get rid of the workaday dust of mediocrity.

Toasts were drunk, songs were sung, and the waves of sensation of a general feeling of happiness burst high over me and carried me with them. But the finest thing of all was that I had found a friend again, some one who understood me, as I endeavored to understand him, a friend who, in spite of the difference in our years, recognized me as an equal at heart, and who was willing to help and guide me through the difficult passages of my career as a student.

So great was my happiness that all second thoughts were dissolved in it, and when I left him at two in the morning I expressed my wish to join the "Littauer" and asked him to put my name up.

"Don't be in too great a hurry, my friend," he replied. "Come again, and then again, and then make up your mind."

I thanked him for the tender consideration which he showed to my sense of freedom, but it was not until later that I discovered its real origin. As a matter of fact, it was necessary to visit the circle three times in order to obtain admission to the association.

I spent the next morning in overhauling my financial situation. I worked out how much I had to pay for rent, how much for university fees, how much I should

have to give for fencing lessons, what the subscription to the association would be, and when I had worked it all out there was very little left for eating and drinking.

But then I went to the beer table one day at noon and was received with the same respectful greetings, and found that I could get an excellent soup, which had a quite respectable piece of beef swimming in it, for thirty pfennigs, while there was a perfect mountain of rolls on the bread platters, which only waited for some one to consume them, and that gratis. Then it suddenly occurred to me as a great revelation that I should be saving money by enrolling myself as a citizen in this country of the blessed.

This calculation found a further justification when, about supper time, I heard a cry beneath my window of, "Radishes, fresh radishes."

I worked it out. Radishes ten pfennigs; white bread, ten pfennigs. Then salt and butter, which I got for nothing from home and which I need not reckon—well then I should have a certain number of groschen which I could employ with profit at the evening beer table. I had no doubt but what I could manage it.

Twenty-four hours later I was wearing a ribbon, green, white, red in color.

But I had scarcely passed it over my shoulder when the picture of my surroundings altered amazingly.

There were no longer any signs of the considerate attention with which I had hitherto been greeted and which had seemed to me so pleasant. On the contrary, as soon as I appeared I was snapped at and trodden underfoot. I was ordered about and shut up.

"Fresher, do this." "Fresher, do that." "Fresher, *Steig in die Kanne*," which is by interpretation, "Drink by way of punishment." "Fresher, shut up."

"Fresher, drink up your whole glass by way of punishment," etc., and *ad infinitum.*

I looked about, absolutely bewildered, for some one to help me, but I found no one. Everybody seemed to be in a conspiracy against me. It was no comfort to me to know that all other Freshers were in the same plight. I could only see my own sufferings and thought that I was being treated like a dog.

My one hope was my new friend whom my soul had hailed as a brother, but no matter how much I longed to meet him again, he was never there.

It is true that there was a Neiss II, but he had turned himself into a swollen beer cask and seemed a very unlikely subject for intimate conversation.

All the same, I took my courage in both hands one evening and asked him, "Where is your brother, Neiss?"

"What has my brother to do with you, Fresher?" he answered, and then I did not know what to say and withdrew abashed.

And then, on the next "official" occasion, he suddenly turned up. I ran forward to meet him with outstretched hand. "Neiss, Neiss, Neiss," I cried.

He looked me over from top to bottom with an expression which had nothing peculiarly friendly in it, and said: "What the devil is the matter?"

Then I realized that I had lost him forever, or rather, that I had never possessed a friend in him.

And while I was moving away, trying to swallow down this latest and bitterest pain, I had the pleasure of overhearing him say to his neighbor, while he pointed to me, "That was a hard job, to persuade that fathead to join us."

I had to continue in the servitude which I had laid upon myself, and it weighed so heavily upon me that

I had but little strength and inner feeling left for the real business of existence.

It is true that I did not neglect my duty. I attended my lectures and a few more besides, but I got little good out of them. I had a hang-over and my head was stupid, and so I sat there and wrote down dazedly as much as I was able to understand, were that Anglo-Saxon grammar, or Old French dialects, or Gothic, or something else, how should I know? But it was necessary to work hard, for the term examination was coming on and on that depended the scholarship which we were all anxious to get.

At the beer table I learned that, far from being forbidden, the habit of attending lectures was even encouraged. But at the same time it was no pleasure to be regarded as an earnest person or as a model student. Finally, I ended up by doing as the others did. I got as much sleep as I needed in the morning, then went off to the beer table, ate some hot sausages, and then went off to the fencing school, so as to get a little suppleness into my stiff limbs.

In the afternoon we played *skat*, four of us, at Steiner's, the confectioner's, with coffee and liqueurs, or we took a stroll out to the *Hufen* where we drank in the open, including beer, and in the evening we did the same, leaving it to Nature to decide whether we should make our presence felt through the clouds of tobacco smoke and smell of beer, by means of the open window.

As soon as the early days of summer dawned, our beer table was laid out in the garden, where we had the satisfaction of being admired and envied by the smug citizens around us. But in the long run it was the same story: "Drink by way of punishment." Then again, "Drink to a toast." "Drink in answer to

one's own toast." Only drink. The same repetition of toasts and of honoring them. A stale, foolish frittering away of youthful strength and health, to say nothing of one's night's sleep and freedom of thought.

Yes, freedom of thought. I should say so.

If in my life I have ever been bound unto slavery, I know only one other, and that came much later—its name is Literature—but if there ever was a slavery, it was that imperious impulse which set mental life on a road with which it had nothing to do, no, nothing at all.

This road led me to the fencing school, and its end was the *mensur*.

No one who has not belonged to a "dueling association" has any idea what an important rôle the fencing school plays in the life of a student who belongs to one of these societies.

Just think of this: Here we have a youngster in sore need of knowledge, a lad who might reach the loftiest heights, let loose in the world in all innocence, and at the same time this lad possesses a thinking apparatus in his brain which can assimilate anything without trouble and then turn it into thoughts as great as any of those which the greatest in the realm of the spirit have ever thought; a youngster, moreover, equipped with that wonderful power of building up associations which we only possess when we are twenty, and which we who are older, or old, look back upon with envy, as though we were gazing backward to a lost paradise.

And then—a month later, the selfsame youngster has been shut up in a kind of spiritual stable, such as is usually inhabited by gladiators or boxers, permeated by an atmosphere of blood and disinfectant, decorated with the withered wreaths of some previous fencer

who won his battles *selon les règles de l'art*, and perpetually interspersed with shouts of "*Tiefquart! Hackenterz!*" etc.

One acquires a new ambition, a new aspect of existence rises suddenly before one which extinguishes everything else, or at least renders it of comparatively little importance, although that which is extinguished merely includes one's previous ideas of hope, joy in the wielding of arms, and of the laurels to be achieved thereby.

One or another had to go to lectures, but he did not stay five minutes longer than necessary, and gave to the lecture no more of his inmost being than was absolutely necessary.

Then one's thoughts returned at once to the goal of one's longing, of one's enthusiasm, to the one thing which made life really worth living—namely, dueling. Dueling overshadowed every other possible interest. It was the only topic of conversation. The university and its teachers did not exist, and it would have been disgraceful to mention it at the beer table. It was only at the end of term, when we had to get our lecture books signed up, that we had to consider ways and means to induce the professors, many of whom were only known to us by name, to give us their signatures.

Those who were studying medicine were best able to carry out the demands made on them by their education, owing to the fact that they *had* to do some work, especially of a practical nature. If things became serious then they went off into the "Empire" or went on to the "inactive" list, and thereafter one saw them seldom.

The law students, however, were able to waste an immense amount of time. They left the minimum

that they had to learn, in order to become a *Referendar*, to the coach, whose business it was to push them through their examination, after they had spent five or six terms at the university without even seeing the building unless one of our constitutionals happened to take us past it.

We students of philology came between these two extremes. If anyone realized, toward the beginning of his eighth term, that no amount of work would finally help him at all, he became a private tutor, so as to be able to prepare himself for the Middle School examination.

In this way one gained at least four terms, which were devoted almost entirely to drinking and dueling. I ought not to forget to mention that this students' dueling was strictly prohibited by law, but I need scarcely say how scornfully we shrugged our shoulders at this fact. The university officials were blind, willfully, and the police were given cigars.

How could it be otherwise in a state in which it was necessary to have been a member of a "dueling association" to reach any decent position in the official hierarchy?

There was at Königsberg another dueling association which caused us Lithuanians a great deal of hard thought. To-day they have become a corps and are thoroughly in the swim, but in those days we were not even allied with them, and could, consequently, not cross swords with them, for the guiding principle was the rule that a meeting on the field of battle was no sign of enmity, but could only take place when one had formed a solemn alliance beforehand—that is, impersonally.

This alliance was at the same time something which we wanted and something from which we hung back.

We needed it, on the one hand, so as to be able to give the necessary employment to the lusty arms of fifty youngsters thirsting for battle, for the "Goten," the only association with which we dueled, could not possibly satisfy our thirst for blood, owing to the smallness of its numbers. But, on the other hand, we should have had to put up with a series of impossible conditions in order to be able to close the alliance.

Among other things, we fought with one kind of dueling sword, and they with another, and I ask you what association careful of its honor will throw away the weapons which it considers best, like so much scrap iron, to satisfy the overweening pride of some other association? No! Never! Never!

And so the battle over the right kind of dueling sword raged as fiercely as though all possible kinds of human difference were embodied therein.

But one must not imagine, from what I have written here, that I was a spoil-sport. On the contrary, I loved dueling and did well at it. If I had only stayed for a few more terms, Heaven knows what a matador I might not have become. My *Tiefquarten* cut was never very successful. It usually fell flat, and therefore did no harm, but I had acquired a *Terz* cut which went right over my opponent's guard and caught him at the back of his head just above his neck, and in course of time that became irresistible. Alas! alas! how many of my talents have perforce gone to seed.

But, gentle readers, the emotions which that world was able to evoke are so strong that in spite of my joking to-day I find, in writing these lines, my breast swell with pride that I was a good fencer, although it is more than forty-five years ago. And a term later,

after I had left the association in fury, one of my previous comrades met me on the street and said:

"Now that we have a dueling arrangement with that other association, Sudermann"—they had, after all, accepted the impossible conditions—"we could do very well with your sword."

That was praise which made me beam for many a year when I thought of it. I have always had an immense respect, which even enmity could not diminish, for anybody who could really do something. And, of course, in those days I had, too, an immense admiration for our great fencers. Did they not stand for the honor of our association, and did they not also fight for my pride and my honor?

I found my highest ideal, however, not in my own association, but among our great opponents, the "Goten."

This was Robert Hessen, the Robert Hessen whom many of my readers must have known personally, for he lived amongst us—even if his last years were lonely and embittered—and died two years ago. He began his career as a doctor, but abandoned the medical profession and became a writer on æsthetics, by which he made his reputation.

I have never seen a finer young man in my life. He was about six feet in height, broad shouldered with slender hips, with a waist in which the upper part of his body was suspended as if on a ball bearing, so that all his movements were free and graceful. He had a straight nose which seemed as if it had been cast in bronze, and a pair of gray eyes which flashed like fire in the face of the world which they could comprehend, but could not master, for his nature was soft and entirely subject to his sense of honor.

I could wish, my lady readers, both girls and grown

women, that you had met him at that time. Many, many years later, when his head was already silver, a young and quite innocent servant girl whom I sent to him with a message, to the Grossbeerenstrasse, a long journey, came back with sparkling eyes and said, "One would go readily to the end of the world to see such a fine man."

And there was a noble lady of whom I was very fond who —— But I had better keep silence.

Robert Hessen fulfilled for me the ideal of my secret desires, and I have often followed him in the street without his knowing it, to be able to give my admiration full play.

He was said to be the best fencer in the university, and he probably was, although the dueling arrangements did not permit him to cross swords with the other great fencers. He was no longer doing any fighting, for he was in his last term, but I once saw him fight.

We had in our ranks a very redoubtable fencer, called Sinnecker, who was left-handed, and consequently had a *Hackenquart* cut for which there was no guard on earth. This *Hackenquart* cut, which is only allowed to a left-handed man and to his opponent, comes up from below into the face, and at the same time makes use of the point, and consequently his nickname was the "Jabber." Our "Jabber," who had jabbed everybody with whom he had fought, had the ambition to try a bout with Hessen.

There were protracted negotiations, for Hessen had to consider his examination and did not wish to do any more fighting, but when one appealed to his sense of honor, he would not have been Hessen if he had not sent all his worries about his examination to the devil.

I can tell you that it was a battle of giants. Both

faces soon became unrecognizable, so thoroughly had they been chopped into mincemeat. Each stood in a pool of blood which was covered over with sawdust, only to be filled again. Each ought to have retired at least ten times, but the honor of the associations and their personal reputations were at stake and demanded that they should go on fighting.

And so, cut to pieces as they were, they went on and on, how long I do not know. If I had not met Hessen often later on, and if I did not know that he was dead, I should be inclined to believe that they were still fighting to-day. I will remain decently silent about my own achievements, and not only from modesty. I knocked my man out only once, but on the other hand, I never left the field of battle defeated, and that is the only song of praise which I can sing about myself.

The fact, however, that I did not consider dueling sacred, and not even important, was the first thing which caused me to fall into disgrace with the older members of the association.

A Freshman who spoke of fighting as a fine form of amusement with arms or who described it as a kind of test of skill, in itself of no importance, was a blasphemous person who might be disastrous to the proper spirit which ought to inspire generations to come. He was, therefore, a person who ought to be suppressed.

And so I soon found myself, no matter where I went, followed with unpleasant and cutting remarks, which were, perhaps, intended to "educate" me but which made me shy and obstinate to the depths of my being.

And then it happened that some one suddenly found out my secret "crime." How it was discovered, and

by whom, I cannot imagine. Perhaps I confided in somebody while I was intoxicated, or perhaps somebody went through my papers. I do not know, but one evening, while we were sitting at the "official" beer table, my neighbor called out to the whole table:

"Let me show you one of the wonders of the world."

All heads were turned, my own among them, and then he said:

"Sudermann, stand up."

Perplexed and full of the foreboding of coming disgrace, I stood up, and, just as one exhibits a double-headed calf at a fair to the gaping multitude, my neighbor called out:

"Here is a Freshman, a miserable Freshman, a worthless Freshman, who, instead of coming to the beer table every evening, crouches at home in his room, and what do you think he does? You won't guess what it is! He crouches at home in his room and writes plays."

He was greeted with roars of laughter. This fellow handed me over to the scorn of my contemporaries and to that of future generations.

Thereafter the "Fresher Playwright" was always exhibited as a sight to odd people who were passing through, and thus removed with a gentle rebuke into that class of lunatic whom, as his lunacy is comparatively harmless, you permit to run about with you, with a shrug of the shoulders.

It is true that there were some friends who took intellectual achievements seriously, and these said:

"Leave him alone. If he develops properly he may some day be able to write us some good 'beer journals.'" But for the majority I remained an easy mark for ridicule and for jokes which always hit and which were always certain of general applause.

You must not suppose that these young untamed people were really enemies of education, or that they regarded the writing of plays as something contemptible. It was simply their inability to realize that anything serious could arise out of such a humble beginning, which would be able to hold its own in the world, and it was this which aroused their sense of mirth. One might become a judge, one might become a doctor, or if one were possessed of extraordinary abilities or had the necessary influence, one might even get to Berlin and find a post in the administration. But to become a poet, to be successful and to desire to become famous, that could only happen to other people who lived somewhere in the Empire, people whom one had never met and who bore the stamp of genius plainly upon their foreheads. But it could not possibly happen to a poor Freshman of the Littauen Association, whose first duty as a member of the club was, not to be different from his mediocre contemporaries.

And yet there was one man who, rising from the beer table of the Littauen, had conquered the German world by his poetry. This unique person, this great man of whom one spoke with respectful wonder, was Wilhelm Jordan, the poet of the Nibelungen. In the course of his journeys, when he recited his poems, he once came to Königsberg and sent us a dozen free tickets as a sign that he had not forgotten his old associates. But he did not care to appear among us. We did not expect anything different; it would have been too much condescension.

On the other hand, his brother, a drunken old chap called Pielke-Jordan, came twice a year to Königsberg from the dull little spot where, I believe, he was a local judge, to spend an evening with us. And early

one morning, when I took him home, with two others, as drunk as a lord, I scarcely ventured to take his arm, so filled was I with trembling reverence because I was touching the brother of the man who had written "Demiurgos."

I, too, had managed to secure a ticket for the Nibelungen lecture, and I can still remember the singsong voice with which the poet, who was so much worshiped at that time, shouted his alliterative verses. Somewhere in "Faust" it is written, "Here is a miracle. We have but to believe it and every artistic production is surrounded by this sentiment."

And I believed. After the lecture was over I walked for hours through the snow-covered streets and pictured to myself with a feverish imagination how I, too, would some day make pilgrimages from time to time to act as prophet to my own works. To-day I write very polite letters declining this honor—and there are few literary associations who do not possess one of them—so as to be able to secure a little peace during the morning at my writing table.

But this disclosure of my literary tendencies had one good effect. It brought me a friend, the first real friend whom destiny had sent me since Blechschmidt had passed to the shades.

His name was Reubekeul. He was a science student and had been at the university a term longer than I had. He had a heart of gold, but had gone entirely to the dogs. I had never met a heavy drinker with so much recklessness.

He had a kind of cheerful recklessness, such as children and savages possess, for whom there is no thought of the morrow or even of the past, if it is troublesome to remember it. He was a handsome, slender youth with fresh, scarred cheeks and a pair

of gray, sparkling eyes in his head which left no girl in peace who happened to come within their field of vision.

He no longer worried about lectures. It is true that I have never seen him with a notebook under his arm, but on the other hand he was at home with all the poets. Mirza Schaffy was his hero. He knew the whole of Scheffel by heart, and all the Anacreontic literature which had appeared in the world found in him its prophet. He had no room of his own. He preferred to camp out on the sofa of any friend whom he took home hopelessly intoxicated. In the morning he bought himself a clean collar from the nearest linen draper, and was then perfectly ready to meet the world.

When I got to know him better I tried to get him to take a proper room.

"What's the use?" he replied. "I have two already; the only trouble is that I can't remember where they are."

"Yes, but where have you left your things?" I asked.

"How should I know?" he answered. "They are all over the place."

After a long search I succeeded in finding some of his property, which I took into my possession for greater security, and one day he surprised me with the news that he now had quarters which a prince might envy and proposed to settle down and become respectable.

The princely lodging turned out to be a dirty little hole in the Koggenstrasse, which was avoided by anybody who knew Königsberg, owing to the danger of finding bedbugs there. But when I called his attention to this he replied:

"It does not matter; I shall never sleep there."

In order to assist him to recover the habit of living in his own house to some extent, I determined never to leave him alone again in the evening, and to share the room with him for the time being.

I proposed to sleep on the sofa—that is to say, if a kind of creaking board full of prickles which none the less consisted of hills and valleys deserves the name of sofa—but he said that that would not do; he was so accustomed to sleeping on the sofa, he would not be able to get a wink of sleep in a real bed. So we changed our sleeping quarters and everything seemed to be as right as a trivet.

But presently I observed an unseemly sensation of life in the neighborhood of my long legs. Long columns began to march up them with a tickling sensation, and presently I was aware of pains which made me jump as if I had cramp. Yes, it was bedbugs.

Then my friend broke out, "Good Lord! bedbugs!"

We got up, lighted the candle, and examined the situation. At the first glimmer of light our uninvited guests had retreated from the bed and sofa, but on the other hand they crowded in greater numbers on the walls, where the tattered wall paper hung down in festoons. At the points where the wall paper and the wall met, were a series of dugouts where we could scarcely reach them with the deadly soles of our boots. We therefore decided to condemn them to death by burning, carrying out the sentence by setting fire to the festoons of wall paper, which burned quite as readily as we wished and became the funeral pyres of our enemies. But behind the pictures the wall was so alive with them that it looked like a public meeting.

It was consequently necessary to begin a special *auto-da-fè* with the cardboard backing of the pictures,

and if the pictures were destroyed in the process, well, there were, anyway, the frames, which one could hang up again undamaged on the wall.

We carried out our campaign for some nights in this fashion, without, however, being able to boast of any noteworthy success. And then my friend abandoned the joys of possessing his own quarters and returned to the hospitable sofa which was always at his disposal in the room of some heavily intoxicated comrade.

And so much feared were we students that when we took our leave the landlady gave us her blessing instead of presenting a bill for the pictures and wall paper, or even for a tablecloth which had also perished in the conflagration.

But during the next winter my friend was obliged to return to a comparatively orderly life. It is a pity that the cause of this was a misfortune which had befallen his parents. The property on which they had lived for a number of years was put up compulsorily for auction, and they were obliged to move into the town with the few sticks of furniture which remained to them, and endeavor to live on a small pension. The aged father also obtained a small position in a dairy which brought him in one hundred marks a month, but which compelled him to go off to business, summer and winter, at two o'clock in the morning.

Anyone who has seen my "The End of Sodom" knows what the home conditions of old Jankow, and also the parents of my friend, were like. He himself does not appear in the play, for I used another model for Willi, whom I met eight years later.

The charming scapegrace who lived amid those surroundings found a steadying point and refuge in this misfortune.

He had a room in which, it is true, he could not do exactly as he liked, but in which there stood a snow-white bed ready for him every evening, and when he opened his beer-burdened eyes about noon he only needed to stretch out his left hand toward the bell-pull and his sister would bring him in his coffee with a loving smile, and hold it to his lips without even a reproachful murmur.

He fully intended that his life should now be devoted to higher things in such a decisive fashion as would cut him off from his past. But first of all there were his accursed debts, secondly there were the accursed girls, and thirdly there was that accursed headache in the morning. And the combined strength of these three factors showed themselves to be plainly far above the strength of any mortal. And so at first his life went on as before. The fact that his family regarded me, to begin with, like a guardian angel did not help much, for he was as weak as water, and so full of humor that when he laughed at me after one of my moral lectures I could not help laughing with him. But in spite of my lack of success the samovar steamed hospitably for me every afternoon, and a smile of welcome beamed on every face when I came in at the door.

Destiny thus again gave me another kind of home, which remained open to me long after I had turned my back on the walls of Königsberg.

Then there was also Uncle Eduard.

I have not said anything about my mother's family, although they are the only people whom I have really regarded as relatives during my life. Uncle Eduard was a severe, finely built man at the end of the forties, with a snub nose, spectacles, and a perpetual sore throat. He was the rector of the communal school

at the Nasser Garten, a quarter of the town which lay beyond the fortifications and which consisted of one long endless street inhabited by poor people.

I was always ready to respect and love people, and I had gone to meet him, ready to give him boundless admiration, for I knew that he played an important part in the German teachers' movement, and that he was listened to attentively when he spoke as representative of his district at the great annual meeting. I was, therefore, the more surprised when the bulk of the respect which I tried to show him awakened no echo in him, and when he seemed to regard the things for which I respected him as matters of no importance, while his motives were very different from the ideals with which I had clothed him vaguely, perhaps, but none the less with holy zeal.

I presently perceived that there was such a mental difference between us, due, perhaps, to his entirely different education, as would leave me miles apart from him in my efforts to reach the heights. And then there was a superfluous wife, a young, plump woman whom he had just married *en seconde noce;* his first marriage had not been happy. To see this middle-aged man in the capacity of a gushing lover was fatal to my opinion of him. And when I saw him caressing and squeezing his wife in the hopes of extracting an embarrassed smile from her, I had a feeling that he was demeaning himself.

One day he allowed himself to give me a scolding, which I considered went beyond his authority over me. And after that I ceased to visit his house, for I was just as obstinate as he.

He died a few years later of a painful disease, and wrote me a letter shortly before his death which made my heart bleed.

And now I wish to sing the praises of my dearly beloved uncle David.

I had always wanted so much to possess some really respectable relatives, but I had never done so, and it was not until much later that I realized what there was to admire in their characters.

It was, therefore, my wish to see my uncle David a pilot commander, and in my ambition I was always imagining him invested with this dignity, but he obstinately remained a poor, ordinary pilot, and as such left the service and died. He lived not far off, at Pillau, which is now the most easterly port of our sorely diminished Germany, with Aunt Malchen, in a street of toy houses each of which was inhabited by two of his profession, and when the call went at three o'clock in the morning for the pilots to go aboard, the man who awoke them only had to hammer with his fist against the shutters as he passed, and the crew on duty was on its feet at once.

My uncle David suffered from two troubles—rum and rheumatism. Perhaps a third was Aunt Malchen and the iron rod with which she ruled him. The rum he took he also used for medical purposes, for he used it as an embrocation for his aching limbs, and so repaired the damage which it had probably caused him at other times.

Aunt Malchen will find no severe judge in me on account of this state of affairs, for the old bandy-legged salt needed her care very badly.

When he said to me, "Let us go and have one," his little sleepy eyes sparkled as saucily as those of a naughty little boy, as if he meant to show both Aunt Malchen and all respectable society how bold and bad he could be.

I think that when my distinguished countryman,

Robert Johannes, composed his famous ode, "To Aunt Malchen," he must have had *my* aunt Malchen in mind, so well does every word fit her homely, motherly soul. And as Nature is never miserly in such matters, she had created not only one, but three Aunt Malchens, who were all there to look after my uncle David, to spoil him, and to protect him from the temptations of this world.

And so my uncle David sat warmly packed up in his cotton-wool surrounding of love when he was not fortunate enough to escape from it, so as to get a drink at the pilots' room, or was not tossing about in the pilots' boat amid wave and storm.

By night he lay groaning there, and Aunt Malchen's pitying heart cried over him. She died before him and left him behind her like a helpless child. Then one of the other two Aunt Malchens, who had abandoned her maidenhood late in life for the benefit of a young and cheerful furrier, took her place and brought my uncle over to her house, where he spent the last years of his life, blind, and suffering terribly from the rheumatism he had got at sea. And from her house he departed quietly on his voyage over the sea of nonexistence.

I have one more story to tell of my relatives and of those whose blood runs in my veins. And it is the best.

It leads me back to the house on the Schwalbenberg in which my grandmother brought up five fatherless orphans ready to meet life, and in which my mother dreamed her youthful dream.

It is a poor little house, low and thatched with straw, with small, dark windows and leaning in every direction. So it appeared to me one day when I crossed over the Haff from Elbing to show myself off to my

maternal relatives in my youthful splendor as a boy in the second class.

In the little garden which surrounded it the primroses were in bloom and the lilac was just beginning to bud, and the laughter of young girls, cousins and half cousins without number, pealed in my ear. There, like the flowers in spring, I got those first kisses in games of forfeit and chasing, those first kisses which left behind a strangely sweet taste on my lips and a sweet tumult in my heart, which had no name and which could have none, because it was all a game.

A climb of a few minutes led to a landmark, which crowned the top of the hill from which one could look out on the world which one intended to conquer, spread out humbly before one's feet: the yellow Haff, and the grass-green sea, and the sunlit country in between. There were, too, ships which came and went, barks and schooners and proud three-masters with canvas as high as a tower, and black pot-bellied monsters which had to unload here in the harbor because the channel of the Pregel up to Königsberg was too narrow and shallow to enable them to take their cargoes so far. They hailed from Portsmouth or Glasgow, or even from Kingston or Batavia. My grandmother used to climb to this landmark every day as long as she was able, watching for my grandfather to wave to his home from one of these incoming craft, but her eyes were never to be gladdened by the longed-for signal.

How well one could understand a lonely woman standing up here all her life long, so as not to miss the hour which was to reunite her with her husband.

Her eldest daughter lived and reigned in her stead in the house, busy, hardworking and full of grit. She had married a stone mason called Bruder, a quiet

man with the head of an apostle, who looked shyly and wonderingly at the young life so full of vigor around him.

I remember, too, a later day, when there was great excitement in the house because the author of *Honour* had come from a distance to pay a visit with his mother, together with Aunt Charlotte, who was still beautiful and bore a noble name, and a number of other noble guests. Many a young chicken had to lay down its life in honor of the occasion and there were mountains of boiled rice covered with blood-red raspberry sauce.

We lolled about under the shade of the blooming lime tree, careless whether such a feast was fitting to the scanty wages of the poor mason.

He himself, the host, sat modestly squeezed into a corner, obviously oppressed by a feeling that the company was too fine for him, and when he was helped I noticed that he thanked my aunt with a kind of happy emotion, as if he had no right to expect so much attention. And all the while he looked as if he had but yesterday supped with Jesus at Jerusalem.

That was the last visit I paid to the house at the Schwalbenberg. It has long since passed into other hands and two of the dear little cousins with whom I played as a half-grown lad are looking after my mother. Meanwhile they have reached the sixties, and, though we often kiss one another, our hearts no longer beat the faster for it.

CHAPTER XII

HOW I REGAINED MY FREEDOM

MY conscience as a novelist accuses me of having wandered rather at random in the preceding pages, and had I been writing a novel I should have known how to arrange my material much better, I should have managed the initial stages artistically, working up to my climax by degrees; I should have expunged this and added that. But what I am essaying to write is in no sense a kind of "truth and poesie." It is simply a series of pictures, and if any of it has a scientific value as a history of development, well, so much the better.

So I must return ruefully to my Lithuanians, for the period during which they influenced my life soon comes to an end.

For the time being I continued to strut about like a peacock, in my dull white student's coat with the black cord and tassels, my student's cap embroidered with silver stuck forward over my forehead, and my legs tightly encased in highly polished high boots. I must have looked rather well, for when we celebrated the midsummer festival on the shore at Memel, where Rombinus, the sacred hill of the Lithuanian people, rears its head, I was selected, as being one of the tallest of our association, to be one of the two guards who walked beside our green-white-red banner with drawn swords of state.

Thence I came home for the summer holidays, and so overwhelming was the effect of my rise to be a

Freshman member of the "Lithuanians," that my poor father, who had to pay for the whole of my splendor, however unwillingly, looked up at me at our first meeting with unmistakable admiration.

The glory of belonging to an incorporated association with its own colors surrounded me wherever I went or stood, and even the young ladies of my home who had hitherto been reserved and stand-offish, came over to my side with flying colors.

But my splendor stood on a very insecure base. At the earnest solicitations of my mother, accompanied by all manner of promises and assertion on my part, my father had promised to give me support from time to time for another term, but thereafter I was to stand on my own feet.

But how? My mother wrote nightly, to the Emperor and all other potentates, letters which were never returned. She also wrote a short story called "Grandmother's Pastime," which would be sure to bring in a lot of money if it were only accepted by the *Gartenlaube*.

Then, above all, there were our Russian relatives, who, as everyone knew, were enormously rich, possessing, as they did, vast estates reaching over square miles, and such enormous herds of cattle that they could not be counted, but were only estimated, by the simple method of making a corral of a certain size and filling it and emptying it again until everyone was tired of doing so.

The one solid basis for the Eldorado was the fact that two generations before, some Mennonite families, who were unwilling to accept the principle of universal military service, on religious grounds, had emigrated to South Russia and there had attained to a considerable measure of prosperity. Among them, were some

members of my father's family whose children had kept in touch with the old home by occasional letters. What their names were or where they lived we did not know, but in this our relatives at Elbing could help us and support our request for help. If they would lend me a thousand rubles, that would enable me to spend two more terms at the university. What was to happen then I did not worry about at the time.

These thousand rubles played an immensely important part in my life. They were responsible for the dreams, the dodges and artifices of the months which followed, and for their sake I was even glad that I had parted in peace with the "good aunt" at Elbing. I even made a trip to Elbing on their account, and strutted through the streets, the admiration of all beholders, and in the window of a strange house I actually saw Klara Hornig, who leaned out to look at me with curiosity, while her dear features flamed a sudden red when I greeted her.

But I did not go to see her. Why not? I wish one of my readers would tell me. But the upshot of my diplomatic maneuvers was, that after months of negotiation my appeal for help was sent off to Russia, together with a recommendation from a relative. But six months passed before I got an answer.

In the meantime I spent a very anxious period, tormented with worries, and was soon obliged to borrow money, and to do so was presently in the clutches of the money-lenders.

The procedure was extremely simple. You signed a note of hand for one hundred marks, got some one to back it, on condition of doing the like for him when it was necessary, and went off with this to a respectable and business-like person who lived not far from the Steindammer Tor and who was prepared to give you

fifty marks when he was satisfied that you really belonged to the "Lithuanians." When the note fell due, he was perfectly willing to renew it in return for a fresh bill for one hundred and fifty marks, and so it went on in arithmetical progression. But if, meanwhile you needed an extra fifty marks, you applied to an obliging widow who lived in the Sackheim. Your indebtedness to her increased rather more rapidly, as she preferred the simpler method of doubling the amount, so that if you had only had rope enough, you would have had as many debts as it would take the revenue of the Great Mogul to settle. Borrowing from the widow had the further advantage that she had a daughter with whom you might fall in love without its costing anything extra.

This fool's paradise had, however, its limits. There came a day when the obliging money-lenders refused to renew their notes, and while you were still considering whether it was preferable to throw yourself into the river or to put a bullet through your head, you found yourself expelled from the university with infamy.

I saw a number of fine young men disappear in this fashion, including—but I will mention no names, lest their sons might be saddened.

I myself was spared this horrible fate, but I should have disappeared, too, had I not been able to manage to save myself just in time, and been condemned to slink past respectable people for the rest of my life with the knowledge that I had an indelible disgrace branded on me. And instead of leveling a bitter complaint against the same society which was ready to sit in judgment upon me, I stupidly helped a number of poor devils to find their inevitable ruin.

Another factor which was not less deadly than this

borrowing from money-lenders was the continual drinking. There were experts in boozing who boasted that they could stow away the eighth of a cask during an evening, and many a student ruined his health for life in this way.

Try as I might, I never got beyond eighteen mugs, but I got into such good training that during my second term I never got hopelessly drunk.

But there were amusing incidents enough. I remember one early morning, when I returned home with a considerable load, feeling the weight of the bedclothes so oppressive that I could scarcely breathe. I was awakened by peals of laughter which revealed the real situation to me. I was sitting on the steps of my house, my keys clenched firmly in my hand. My roommate, who was just as drunk as I was, was fast asleep in my lap, while around us stood a circle of early risers, rejoicing in the spectacle.

The great thing to do, after a heavy night like that, was to go to the "Fleckbude" in the Schwange, a gloomy little restaurant, where, for a few groschen, one could get a plateful of hot tripe heavily peppered, the gritty portions of which remained for a long time afterward in the mouth.

If one was not actually in one's "colors," one could go on to a low boozing ken which adjoined it, which was otherwise strictly out of bounds, as the honor of the association demanded that one should behave decently.

But if one felt inclined to visit this den of iniquity, one took off one's ribbon and fastened one's cap to the lining of one's overcoat, so that it should be as inconspicuous as possible.

The girls, however, unless they were newcomers, knew us all, from seeing us on our afternoon con-

stitutionals, and when we came in, congratulating ourselves on our cleverness, bareheaded, they greeted us with a military salute and a shout of, "The Lithuanians forever," or rather, the equivalent of it in students' slang which they had picked up somewhere or other.

For the rest, our relations with the feminine sex had a refreshingly natural animal basis, which does not mean to say that one here and there, certainly the minority, did not indulge in a secret and sacred love affair. The "association nursing sisters" were supposed to administer to this side of our natures, for they played a useful part by receiving our most sacred confidences and curing the after effects of the evening's overindulgence, but this kind of more delicate affair was veiled in a shamed silence.

The average run of our desires and tendencies may best be summed up in the beautiful rhyme which was so often sung as a chorus at the beer table:

> There were two girls a walking
> All on an evening late.
> The one soon found a lover,
> The other had to wait.

Shall I tell you the story of the girl at the poulterer's who tried to lend the necessary solemnity to the occasions of our meeting by laying half a pound of the finest cold meat on my table, proudly yet shamefacedly whenever she came to see me?

But I had one experience, the mere memory of which sends a shudder through me when I think of it, even now, so tragic it was.

It was in May during my third term, and my relations with the association had become so bad that I escaped from the beer evening whenever I could. If

I had stayed in my room, I should have been discovered there and dragged off, so I used to wander about till late in the evening in the "Volksgarten," a new public garden close to the fortifications, where I felt myself safe from observation.

Although the place had rather a bad name, I had often met a young girl there who obviously belonged to the best society and who used to send me a glance of recognition from unnaturally bright eyes as she passed me.

So I finally took my courage in both hands and lifted my cap. To my surprise, she returned my salute with a complete lack of embarrassment as if we had been old acquaintances, the natural result of which was that I stopped in front of her and entered into conversation with her.

What I learned was tragic enough. She was suffering from consumption and had spent two winters in the south on that account. Last autumn, however, she had overheard a conversation between her mother and the doctor, in the course of which he said that these journeys, which imposed the heaviest sacrifices on the family, only served the purpose of concealing from her how ill she was, for she was incurable. She had never given the faintest hint that she had overheard the conversation, but she had refused to go away again and was now fading away, sacrificing herself with cheerful resignation. As she had been ordered to get as much fresh, dust-free air as possible, she was allowed to go for walks as late and as long as she liked, and as she had to pass the Hufen on her way to the usual public gardens, and found it too noisy and crowded, she had found her way to the Volksgarten, though this her parents did not, of course, know. But no one had bothered her so far and I was the first person with whom she had spoken.

I comforted her as well as I could. I told her of people I knew who had been miraculously restored to health. By heavens! I did all I could to pump a little hope of fresh life into her!

She listened to me with a thoughtful, sly smile, and then said:

"I am tired. Shall we sit down?"

There was a seat close to us, half concealed with blooming lilacs, and here we sat so hidden in the dusk that a passer-by might almost have trodden on our toes without discovering us.

My new friend's name was Angela, or so she wished to be called, for she did not tell me her real name.

"I come of a good family," she said, in answer to my question, "and what I am doing now is strictly forbidden to us girls, and I am only doing it because I am as good as no longer in this world and because I want to have some experience before I die, for I can gain none in the grave. But I do not wish to disgrace my parents, and so now you must give me your word of honor that you will never try to find out who I am, not even indirectly, never at all. Will you do that?"

Then when she had received my word of honor, she abandoned all self-restraint, leaned her head against my shoulder and let me put my arm around her.

In those days, the lay public had just learned how infectious consumption is, and I was therefore in no hurry to press my lips on hers.

She probably noticed my hesitation, for she said:

"I know that you have a horror of me, for you believe that my breath is poisonous."

Thereupon I conquered my fears and kissed her.

"I have never been kissed by a man before," she whispered. Then she added, as if to excuse herself,

"But mother has been kissing me for years and it has not done her any harm."

And as if she had thus salved her conscience, she flung her arms round my neck and pressed her lips so close to mine that I could not have removed them even by force.

Then a fit of coughing interrupted her passionate kisses and I thought to myself, "That is how Death kisses us."

As I felt that nothing could matter now, I again took her into my arms and it seemed as if she could not get enough of my caresses. Before we parted I had to promise her to meet her at the same place the next evening—and I did so.

I had no doubt whatever that I, too, was now doomed to death as she was. But what did that matter? I loved her, and because I loved her I was quite ready to go together with her to death.

No, not quite, because I was just about ready to write my play "The Daughter of Happiness." And there were lots of other things, too, which I wanted to write. But destiny had apparently decided otherwise, and therefore the thing to do was to die cheerfully.

When we met the next evening there was a light on her thin face with its vivid contrast of colors which made her seem as if she were an angel come down from heaven. And when we sat down on our seat, and I could not help telling her about my "Daughter of Happiness," she smiled happily and nestled up to me, whispering, "I, too, am such a Daughter of Happiness."

Often, she could not squeeze herself closely enough up to me, and then she would throw herself wildly on to my lap, and I could feel that she was as light as a bird.

The third or fourth evening she declared that she was coming to visit me the next day. I made excuses, told her that several other members of my association lived in my immediate neighborhood and that I should not be able to explain her visit satisfactorily. But she was not to be put off.

"I will come in the dusk when no one can see me," she said, "and I will be as quiet as a little mouse."

And when I objected that we had much more of each other here, she said quite quietly and resolutely:

"I want to be all yours before I die."

Deeply as I loved her, that which she proposed to give me seemed to be too much for me to accept, and that I told her.

And as she always did when I did not seem tender enough to her, she reproached me with feeling a certain disgust in her presence, that I saw her already in a state of corruption, and that the best thing she could do would be to put an end to her life of her own accord.

I then saw that I must not drive her to despair, and determined to put her off from one day to another. At the same time I fell more and more in love with her. Death or life—I had ceased to care which it meant for me.

So that nobody should see us together, we used to part at the entrance to the park, so that I never knew in which part of the town her home lay. But one afternoon shortly afterward, as I was going along the Hinter Tragheim to visit the Reubekeuls, I suddenly recognized her figure, which moved in front of me with a curious floating movement.

I was terribly scared, for I thought that if she turned round she would think that, in spite of my word of honor, I was trying to find out where she lived. I therefore stopped until a greater distance separated us,

but was just able to observe into which house she disappeared. Whether that was her home or whether she was only paying a visit I could not, of course, tell, but when I met her that evening I was very careful not to mention the incident.

Next evening I waited in vain, and for many evenings afterward. And then one afternoon, as I was again going to see the Reubekeuls, I found the street in front of the houses into one of which I had seen her disappear, crowded with carriages and people waiting, and there was also a hearse.

I cannot really say that I had a shock. I only thought, "That may be her funeral."

Then I stationed myself in a house door close at hand, let the tears run down my cheeks, and waited. I had not long to wait, for a black coffin covered with flowers was borne swaying through the wide-open door and laid upon the hearse, which moved slowly away, while the carriages filled with stupidly staring friends and weeping relatives.

There is always a crowd of old women and other idlers ready to follow any "beautiful funeral." I joined the procession with these, and succeeded in reaching the cemetery unnoticed, tormented all the while by the question whether this were her funeral or that of some one else. I could not go close up to the open grave, for I was dressed in a light summer suit and it would also have seemed an intrusion. I therefore heard only a few words of the minister's prayers, of which I could make no proper sense. I could, of course, have easily discovered from the coachmen or grave diggers whether the coffin was that of a young girl, and that was all that I needed to know. But her conditions ran "not even indirectly, never at all," and I was very particular about my word of honor.

To-day, my scruples appear to me ludicrous and scarcely credible, but in those days I was so obsessed by them that I should have rejected angrily any temptation to solve my doubts.

And then, too, there was probably also a little romance connected with this. I still had a faint hope that I might one day meet her on the street, a hope which flattered me with a thousand longing pictures. And although I no longer went to the "Volksgarten," a pilgrimage in the May twilight to go and stand at the dark earth of her grave, on which the wreaths were slowly withering, and to say to oneself, "Perhaps that, after all, is not hers," was a permanent pleasure to me, the sacred pain of which I did not want to destroy.

Well, anyhow, my love for her cannot really have been very deep, otherwise I could not have endured the torture of my doubts for long. Even to-day I am not certain whether or not it was *her* coffin that I followed.

Meanwhile, my relations with the "Lithuanians" had come to a climax. It happened in this way:

We younger members in our second term were ordered to attend the singing lessons which were given to the Freshmen twice a week, so that they might learn to roar out the chorus properly. I obediently carried out the obligations which this order laid upon me. But one day, deeply oppressed with sorrow for my lost love and with other troubles which the last letter from my mother had brought me, I did not feel able to sing cheerful songs, and refused to do so rather shortly. The consequence was that I got an official censure at our next meeting for my rebellious behavior. I stood up, but instead of creeping contritely to the cross as one of my comrades did who was accused of the same offense, I broke out in an outburst against

the intolerable slavery which was imposed on us as free young members of the association.

The first result of this was that my fellow criminal was acquitted, while I got my censure. Another result was that I left the circle, folded up my green-white-red ribbon very neatly, and sent it off with a declaration that I intended to leave the association.

Now I was free again and now I could do what I liked with all the twenty-four hours in the day. It was no longer a crime to write plays, and anyone who jeered at me about it might look out for himself.

Yes, I was free, but I was also lonely.

My neighbors in the house walked past me with a stiff greeting, and even my friend Reubekeul was not to be seen anywhere. I did not try to find him, as I did not know what his attitude toward me would be. Thus I kept to myself for several long weeks; at length he looked me up and remained faithful to our friendship until . . .

He and another, a young man who came from my home, Vangehr by name, whom I still count among my best friends. He practices as a doctor at Tilsit, and once had the curious experience, on his way back from a midwifery case, armed only with an umbrella, of passing between two hostile fighting lines. He marched on bravely and was not hit.

All the rest have disappeared from my life, just as has the Lithuanian Landsmannschaft, which later on became a corps, and in this capacity assisted to prepare for the final débâcle which was a natural result of the spirit of William II.

I met one of my previous comrades during the following winter. He was called Fink and was a senior philological student, and had been one of the few who had showed me friendship, even though rather

contemptuously, as long as I wore the colors of the association.

One day at the Schlossteich, where both he and I ate our midday meal for reasons connected with our lectures, I happened to meet him, and, as he considered me more than ever fair game, he made himself merry in his old fashion over my playwriting, from a neighboring table. I listened for a while to his insulting remarks, and when he stood up I went over to him and said quite quietly, so as to make as little of a scene as possible:

"I challenge you."

This was the usual formula leading to a duel, and, remembering his ten or twenty successful duels, he laughed aloud. I added, politely:

"With pistols."

The matter now became serious for him, for a duel with pistols was not very popular and might have very serious results.

I succeeded in finding two satisfactory seconds, and the "Goten," to whom I turned for assistance, promised to provide me with weapons.

After long negotiations, and in view of the fact that there had been no actual insult, it was decided to fight the matter out with fencing swords, and so I proceeded to attack, in a spirit of bitter revenge, the colors under whose protection I had been obliged to put up with so much wrong.

Robert Hessen, my idol, acted as umpire, and the battle began.

But we did not do much to one another. Fink's *Tiefquar* cut struck me with the flat of the blade, and I had meanwhile lost my cunning with my *Terzquart.* When we stepped back my left cheek was as split and bruised as if I had been hit with a crowbar.

Hessen held up a mirror before me, and we all laughed. But after this the Lithuanians greeted me with more respect than I had ever previously received from them.

To complete the happiness of my new-won freedom, news came from Elbing that the one thousand rubles for which I had asked had arrived and were awaiting my pleasure.

I now saw two terms before me untroubled by care, which I could employ to the best of my ability.

First of all, in writing. I felt that I must hurry up the completion of "The Daughter of Happiness," for, although the fear of death had retired into the background, there were obstacles enough which stood in the way of my ending it.

Then again, with work. Even if I had got on pretty well as far as the term examinations were concerned, there was an immense amount to be made up which had been lost in the beer circle and lying in bed.

I shall not talk about my teachers, for there is a novel, called *The Mad Professor* which has been in my head for forty years and in which most of them play a part. I must not, therefore, pillory them. If destiny gives me another ten years to work in, and that witch which is called the Stage is willing to let me escape from her claws, that novel shall certainly be written.

Like every young student, I followed the views which were given me by my professors, like a little snuffling dog. I swore by Lachmann's Balled theory as a Christian swears by his Gospel, and, therefore, condemned Holtzmann and Zarnke with the utmost contempt. I worshiped Hegel until, a year later, I fell into Dühring's hands, and then I could not find names bad enough for him. It was only in Anglo-

Saxon and Old French that matters passed off peaceably, and that because I despised them, but my scorn was bitterly revenged later on.

When I look back upon that last winter of my second decade I have the sensation as if bells were perpetually sounding in the air and of being almost unbearably happy.

Everything went well, everything was well ordered. I worked, I wrote, I had more than my full share of life. Apart from the money which my Russian relatives had sent me, I was able to make a welcome addition to my income by giving a number of lessons for which I was well paid, and if they caused me to miss my coffee, I replaced it secretly with a bag of peeled almonds. Then I went home and back to my writing table.

About eight o'clock I began to turn sleepy, but as, of course, I was going to work all night, I threw a handful of tea leaves into the pot and brewed myself a hellish black-brown concoction which ought to have made all possibility of sleep for the next ten hours seem absolutely absurd.

But my physique was so robust that, a few minutes after I had swallowed this poisonous stuff, I leaned back gently in my chair, and only woke out of a dreamless sleep when the clock struck six.

That was what I again called "working all night."

But then I made haste to write the next scene, for the Nibelungen lectures began at nine.

THE DAUGHTER OF HAPPINESS
DRAMA IN 5 ACTS AND AN EPILOGUE
BY
HERMANN SUDERMANN

This was and is the simple title which adorns the front page of the manuscript. It still lies in my

drawer, but I warn the curious that the play, although most beautifully copied out, is an incomprehensible piece of nonsense. Originally there may have been in my head a fairly sensible simple piece, copied freely from Freytag's "Valentine," rough enough in speech and action, but still good enough for the theater in the suburbs of that time. Then, however, the language seemed to me not to be sufficiently poetical, and so I took a lot of trouble to polish up every phrase and every expression until, as I hoped, it approximated more closely to the style of "The Robbers." I was not satisfied until I had wiped out all traces of natural language and replaced them by masses of swollen phrases. The hero was a democrat and self-made man, full of the noblest feelings and thoughts. As a matter of course, he was also a writer and inspired with a hopeless passion for a nobleman's daughter. Just in the last act they came together, in a scene copiously illuminated with raspberry-colored lights. There was also a new ethical principle contained therein which might perhaps be recommended to our new Germany. The hero proudly confessed, in order to show how bitterly determined he was to fight his way through life, "And when I was starving I stole."

It is still a mystery to me how anyone with a knowledge of stagecraft, however moderate, can possibly have emerged from this boy of twenty, who, with all his eagerness to succeed, was still stumping about in the valleys like a peddler, and therefore I am very careful not to tell young people, who confidently send me the most dreadful nonsense as evidence of their genius, that they will never become dramatists.

I had known for a long time exactly what I was going to do with my first play. My readers will remember, perhaps, that while I was a boy in the

third class I had been seized with a wild enthusiasm for the tragic actress Hermine Claar-Delia, and that I had already resolved to lay my first play before her feet as the tribute due to her. The time had now come to fulfill this promise, which had remained alive in me all these years.

I knew from the newspapers, that her husband, Emil Claar, was the director of the Residenz Theater, at Berlin. It was, therefore, the most natural thing to place my treasure in his hands first of all. I thought that as soon as he saw the dedication—

Respectfully dedicated to Hermine Claar-Delia.

he would feel it his duty as a man of honor to open wide the doors of his theater to the author of a play which had been sent to him, as it were, for family reasons.

In view of the speedy appearance of this play, I also set about preparing another manuscript which was to assist the producer in his work, and as I knew that a man in this position needs plenty of room in which to write down his instructions as to the scenery, I left him large, wide margins, folding my paper almost in the middle, as is usual in putting in a petition to some public office. I sent the second manuscript just before the Easter holidays, addressed to the director of the Residenz Theater, Berlin, and added a letter in which I said that I myself would come to Berlin to watch the fate of my play in person. Of one thing I had been certain for a long time. The fine old capital of our province could no longer suffice to me as my sphere of activity, although it might be good enough for men like Felix Dahn and Ernst Wichert. I felt it my duty to look for a greater kingdom.

I still had half my thousand rubles left, and the rest of my needs must be provided by the money which I should, of course, receive from my play.

Besides, I was by no means to be despised as a lyric poet. The verses which I composed during my walks and wrote down secretly in my less important lectures already filled a good, stout notebook. They bore heartrending evidence to the despair with which I regarded human existence as such.

Nor was I without understanding souls able to appreciate my poetry. There was, for example, a family of a secretary in the Post Office who were related to the family from whom I rented my furnished room. I was very fond of reading them my latest production, and I can still remember the painful astonishment with which these good, trusting souls stared at me, while I, sitting up very straight in my armchair, vitality and youth sparkling in my eyes, spoke in melancholy accents of the misery which was my only friend. I will only add incidentally that some of the rhymes were peculiarly bad.

I had also begun to take up art and literary criticism in a most promising fashion, although my efforts were, so far, carried on in private, and when the Winter Art Exhibition was open in the fine old Moskowiter Saal, which had once seen Crusaders wandering within its walls, I was very zealous in coming to the most definite conclusions as to modern painting in the most professional manner.

Just look at the following picture: A tall young man with a downy beard, a jaunty hat crammed sideways on to his shock of hair, stamping confidently along the corridor in brilliantly polished high boots and eagerly making notes in a notebook because he is on fire with ambition to be taken for a critic.

One will find it difficult to imagine that anything serious could come out of such a beginning, and still more difficult to believe that I was just at that time passing through the high period of my initiation into Art.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONQUEST OF BERLIN

THE train in which I set forth into the wide world had only got as far as Tilsit when a young man of my own age climbed into the third-class compartment in which I had settled myself down for the next twenty-four hours—a young man whose arrival on the scene gave me but little pleasure.

I knew him, and yet I didn't know him. A bookseller's apprentice, even if he were bold enough to know more about higher scientific matters than the literary lion of the first class, was scarcely the right person to be company for a man who has meanwhile climbed to the heights of human greatness.

I therefore determined to show as cold a shoulder as possible to Herr Neumann—"for he it was," as the yellow-back novels say—and not to thaw out, even if it were my destiny to be cooped up with him all the way to Berlin.

"I should not be surprised if we had met somewhere before," said Herr Neumann, scrutinizing me closely through his glittering pincenez.

"I, too, have a dim memory of something of the kind," I replied, with due reserve.

"Well, have you yet laved your feet in the yellow waters of the Mississippi?" he inquired, innocently.

"What do you mean?" I asked, turning very red, for the phrase had occurred in one of the finest passages of the famous farewell oration which I had made

two years before in the great hall of the Realgymnasium.

"I quoted Sudermann and Sudermann does not understand me," said Herr Neumann. "No inhabitant of this noble city could pay you a finer compliment, after two years' absence. However, I am no longer an inhabitant. I have taken my leaving certificate and am now going to the University of Berlin."

"So am I," broke from me, and therewith I sealed my doom for the next few hours and for many thousand hours thereafter, only I did not know it then.

In five minutes we were engaged in heated discussion. My traveling companion intended to devote himself to mathematics and the natural sciences, but his literary knowledge was enormous.

"Gutzkow? Rot.—Laube? A bungler.—Storm? Hats off.—Hamerling? Immense.—Freytag? Mediocre."

One might think what else one liked about him, but one was obliged to agree with these judgments. Then, too, he knew writers—"quite big writers," he maintained, whose names even I had never heard of. There was a certain Keller, who could put Heyse into his pocket, and another fellow, called Grisebach, who was nothing less than a new Heine. And I knew nothing about him.

Such a lead in literature was painful to me, and I thought I could only recover the lost ground by showing a superior knowledge of philosophy.

But I soon came to grief.

"Hegel? A waste of time.—Fichte? A trumpeter of morals.—Schelling? It all depends upon which of the three Schellings you mean." I had a horrid shock. Could there be two great philosophers, as it might be two great poets, who were related to Schelling or who

bore the same name, who had escaped my attention? Or was there, perhaps, a whole dynasty of Schellings? If so I had never read or heard of it.

"Don't look so amazed," said Herr Neumann. "As everybody knows, Schelling had three periods, which must be strictly differentiated if one is to judge them. But before we start talking about him, I must know which you mean."

It was a mercy that Herbart, Lotze, and Wundt pulled me out of the hole, otherwise I should have been hopelessly floored, in spite of my four terms.

Finally, we agreed in extolling Ludwig Feuerbach, in whom we both saw the savior of modern thought.

The night had passed in the course of our interchange of ideas, and the morn was gilding the battlements of Marienburg. Elbing, my beloved Elbing, the home of Klara Hornig, lay behind me, and I had not noticed that we were passing through it.

My cheeks were burning as though I had just left a party. Here, I felt, was the man who could lift me out of myself.

If only he had not been so unprepossessing. He was predestined to be the perfect lout, both in appearance and in manners, and though I was a fine specimen of one myself, I had a boundless contempt for louts. To such an extent did the influence of that green-white-red ribbon still affect me.

The hours flew by. The barren Tuchler Heath, which the Poles have graciously taken away from us (What would we not give to get it back?), passed slowly before us. We came to Scheidemühl and then to Kreuz. Then came Küstrin, with its memories of Frederick the Great, rising out of the swamps of the Oder, and we still went on talking.

Suddenly some one mentioned the name of Sardou.

We looked at each other aghast. Gracious Heavens! the French! We had been exchanging opinions for nearly twenty-four hours and had behaved as if the great dramatists of our neighbors, who, however, still dominated the German stage, did not exist.

How could we make that good, especially as our destination was getting nearer by leaps and bounds? The stations began to tread on one another's heels, and suddenly, as if our future battlefield were to be revealed to us, one square building after another rose out of the plain—buildings such as we had never seen before, uncanny structures with their blind partition walls which seemed to scream for support, and with their brilliant white scaffolding which made them look as if they were coming to pieces, although it only meant that they were still unfinished.

It was obviously impossible to carry on a connected conversation any longer and it was necessary to make a rapid decision, for, once the ocean of the great city had engulfed us, it might never bring us together again.

The simplest solution seemed to be to stick together. Why not take a room together? Then we could discuss things from morning to night, and if the subject proved to be important, then again from night till morning, and the few hours we spent in listening to lectures would only be an unimportant interruption.

We shook hands on the bargain and then suddenly we were in the old soot-stained station which, before the city railway had made new approaches, received the would-be conquerors who, like Jenghiz Khan, came from the East, into its dark lap, to bear us again and to send us forth new born on our career as conquerors. There was a square entirely surrounded by palaces, an immense coming and going, and a mysteri-

ous excitement over everything as if it were a premonition of Judgment Day.

I found a place next to my friend on the top of an omnibus which was taking us off into the unknown, and still there seemed to be nothing but palaces.

But look! What was that? We had driven for scarcely five minutes through streets which looked exactly alike when I read on a dirty arch which rose over an ugly door the magic words, "Residenz Theater."

The first to greet me then in the endless expanse of my new world was the place of my future triumph.

And I drove on farther, happy in the feverish hope which filled my breast. My friend, who had found quarters somewhere, had left me, but I drove on farther and farther, and could not see enough of the wonderful sights which continually arose around me. I had the same sensation later on, much later on, in Paris and in London, for there is no better means of getting to know and enjoy a great city than from the throne which the top of a bus provides.

Victor Hugo knew that, and I must admit that I am his pupil in this respect, although I have never endeavored to follow him in any other direction.

But my journey also came to an end, and I hastily took the cheapest room in the "Kaiserhof" for Mk. 1.50, and then I went to sleep, passing happily and without dreams into that new magic life which leads by flowery paths immediately into immortality.

At nine in the morning I had agreed to meet my future fellow student, Neumann, in the garden in front of the university, with a view to finding a room which we could share. But with the lack of scruple which now distinguished me I saw quite plainly that I should never find the comrade I was seeking for the

period to come in that lout, who was, after all, a complete stranger, no matter what deep secrets he might be able to reveal about Augier, Dumas, and Sardou. I therefore avoided the rendezvous at the hour named, by making a wide detour, looking uncomfortably around me, and did not feel safe until the colonnade of the National Gallery, the temple-like structure of which I had discovered on my own account with pride and astonishment, gave me the blessed feeling of being able to wander as a peripatetic in the galleries of the ancient world.

Here I felt safe from any undesirable roommate who might disturb the visions of my imagination. Then there suddenly appeared a short-legged figure of a man swinging his arms. The ribbon of his eyeglasses stretched over his right ear in true loutish fashion, and he came to meet me over the resounding flags of the pavement. He looked at me, was embarrassed, and endeavored to disappear by making an abrupt turn to the left. But when it was quite obvious that he could not evade me, he hastened forward with a sudden beam of recognition and a flood of ready excuses, such as his infernal habit of oversleeping himself, the strangeness of the life in the streets, a watch that would not keep time, and Heaven knows what else, so glad to find me again and not to have missed me. With these somewhat inauspicious omens the future student Neumann and my unworthy self entered into a new alliance which has lasted considerably longer than its authors, Messieurs Augier, Sardou & Co. It has lasted to the present day, and anyone who knows my history knows too what Otto Neumann-Hofer has meant to me and means to me.

First of all, we found at the Spandauer Brücke a low but roomy chamber in the fourth story of a musty,

poverty-stricken house close to the Börse city railway station, where in those days there was nothing but tumble-down, blackened tenement buildings instead of the palaces of commerce which occupy the site to-day. And we were soon sitting there, happily rummaging among the books which the prudent bookseller had managed to buy cheap and which he built up carefully along all the walls in immense piles covered with American cloth, for we had no cupboards.

In the meantime I did not omit necessary steps to continue worthily in my academic career.

Supported by introductions which my revered teacher, Schipper—who was subsequently professor of English at Vienna—had given me, I made the usual call on the lions of the Modern Language Schools, Professors Tobler and Zupitza, and introduced myself to them as a future supporter of their various seminars. Both—the former a gloomy pedant, the latter a kindly skeptic—suggested that I should wait until I could satisfy the standards which were necessary before I could claim to let my light shine as an active member of these classes, and advised me to find out what these standards were.

And to put the matter briefly, my light never did shine. When I attended the first meetings of the seminar as a modest listener, I recognized at once that I could not at present reach, perhaps would never reach, those philological heights on which both teachers and pupils performed so nimbly. I was discouraged and went to seminars no more, seeing that I must first dive down again into the elementary stages in whose gloomy depths I had never been able to breathe.

I was not much better off in the German school. A man, called Scherer, still young, who with his snub

nose and his habit of clearing his throat and taking cough lozenges reminded me of my uncle Eduard, lectured on the history of German literature to an enormous class. His lectures were certainly brilliant and gave me many ideas, but the subject appeared so enormously rich and so endless that it also depressed me, and gave me a terrible feeling of fear that I should never be able to find my way about in a world so vast before my five hundred rubles had been spent.

His lectures, too, were rather a pleasure to me than teaching. The teaching was carried out by old Moellenhof, and here we began again the cruel game of stupid inflections and unimportant syntactical points and the endless deserts of examples which illustrated them.

The forty years' wandering in the wilderness which the Jews had to undergo before they saw the Promised Land were an afternoon's constitutional compared with this hopeless journey through the deserts of grammar which were, however, the condition which I had to fulfill before the promised land of poetry would open the doors to its paradise.

I should not have been able to endure the torture for long were it not for the refreshment and recompense which I found in Eugen Dühring. He was blind and worn out with suffering, and was led to his desk by one of his half-grown sons, and he seemed to me like the Homer of some spiritual epic even before he had opened his mouth.

What he taught seemed to me a revelation, and what he condemned immediately sank into the utmost depth of hell. And he was a master of criticism. His judgment spared but few of the great names of the past and of the present.

Heavens! how I despised Leibniz, that charlatan, that plagiarist, that kleptomaniac! Compared with him, that swindler Hegel was almost an honest man. The list of authorities who were to be pilloried began with Anaxagoras, whose spirit that ruled the world, called Nous, was suspiciously like a feeble compromise carried to the limit, and it ended—well, with the philosophy professors then holding their honorable offices at Berlin.

It was a sacred virtue, and worth achieving at the cost of any martyrdom, to tear off the mask of this hypocritical theory of a union between God and the State for their mutual preservation, from their greedy faces. The anger of our idealized teacher rose to the bitterest scorn and the deepest contempt when he spoke of the two leading lights of our university, the famous Professors Helmholtz and Dubois-Raymond, and he never failed to speak of them daily. He did not even spare their wives. I do not remember what crime they had committed, and I probably did not know even then, but that was no reason why I should not hate these doubtless highly respectable ladies with a hatred as fierce as his own.

Our great aim was to strip these important people of their borrowed glories, to drag their secret conspiracy against our freedom into the light of day, and to undermine their pernicious influence. What youngster thirsting for purity and freedom could remain unmoved when the matter at stake was so important?

What a pity it is that I was not born forty years later! If I were twenty to-day, what an outlet I should have found for my feelings! If in the days of my youth my deepest longing was to die on the scaffold, to-day I should have been able to lay down

my young life contentedly under the machine-gun fire of Policeman Noske, whereas about the only possible tragic rôle which I can fill with my sixty years of disillusionment is to be killed by some thief whom I happen to surprise trying to steal my carpets. But, my friends, it was not so easy to make a revolution in those days as the revolutionaries by grace of the 9th of November, 1918, have come to imagine. Bismarck's intolerant and narrow policy was at the height of its power both at home and abroad, and that anyone could possibly attack our deeply revered monarch went far beyond any human imagination, although two would-be assassins tried it a year later.

And so the objects of our attack were the two godlings I have mentioned above, and when Dühring, in consequence of the continual insults which he leveled against them, was called before the Academic Senate and forbidden to lecture, the fury of youth, always ready to be stirred up, knew no bounds.

The Social Democrats, who were at that time a small and uninfluential group, even among the working classes, managed with great skill to lead the current of indignation in their direction, and many a youngster who had hitherto sworn by the young Empire rubbed his astonished eyes in the morning when he awoke to find himself in the Socialist camp. It is not easy to explain the feelings and thoughts at that time which led us to the one true gospel of the Future State. We did not know much about it, and even what Dühring himself had said in his system of political economy could not give us any definitive knowledge about it. The writings of Karl Marx lay beyond our horizon, and Bebel's *Woman* had not yet appeared. The only guide we had to it was Schäffler's pamphlet, *The Quintessence of Socialism*, from which we passionately

imbibed the wine of the new teaching, although the book was directed against it.

We had no doubt that we were dealing with Utopias which, if they were ever to be realized, could only come to pass in the course of hundreds, or even thousands, of years. But was there ever a youngster of twenty who did not confuse these thousands of years with the tiny span allotted to him on earth? When has he not felt himself the citizen of future worlds? And I should like to meet the youth who when, ten years later, Nietzsche's thoughts were reborn in him, did not consider himself an anticipation of the great time when the superman should rule.

But ready as we were to let our longing bear us into paradises of the distant future, we always had a faint sensation that there was a certain amount of nonsense and windy rhetoric about the business, and if it had not been for the demands for political freedom which the Social Democrats so wisely harnessed before their chariot, they would not have been able to make such rapid progress even among those who were most interested in the economic side of their program.

And there is one point with regard to which there is no use deceiving oneself. Middle-class democracy, no matter how unruly it may have been at times, has never been the legitimate heir of the revolutionary ideas which in 1848 aimed at reconstructing the state in accordance with the notions of the age, and of building up a peaceful and powerful Germany that was to have a permanent place among the councils of the nations, instead of being, as it is to-day, powerless, starving, and biting at its fetters.

The policy of the Hohenzollerns, reactionary and without any knowledge of the secret forces at work among the people, led its exponents to believe that

they had stifled the ideas of the revolutionaries of 1848 forever by the foundation of the Empire, whereas it continued to live strongly among the Social Democrats and even became powerful enough to bear on its shoulders the radical economic changes which few believed to be capable of realization.

It must have been this spirit of 1848, which had never died out completely, which filled me even in my maturer years with a fury which has burst into flame at every opportunity, no matter how foolish, and which later on, when I was working for a moderate party, made me reproach myself with being a renegade until I had severed my connection with those for whom I was working.

So I joined the movement blindly which proposed to revenge Dühring as a Socialist for the persecution to which he had been subjected.

How? That we did not know. One might propose to burn down Helmholtz's house, another to remove Dubois-Raymond from his lecture room by force of arms, but nobody, not even the proposers themselves, took such schemes seriously. The scheme which came nearest to being carried out was that of organizing a series of rowdy interruptions in the lecture rooms of these professors, but it was never carried out because we were all ashamed of anything so paltry.

But I remember a mass meeting which was held in the great hall of the Artisans' Union and which worked us up to storms of fury. Just as accident had brought us together, we young people cemented the bond tighter. We swore oaths like that of Rütli, and marched, after the meeting, in masses through the feverish summer night.

If we found a public house open, we burst in, drove out the few remaining guests, and made bloodthirsty

speeches until we were put out. But to-morrow! To-morrow we would carry the thing farther and our indignation should flame more fiercely. The rendezvous was fixed, and each of us promised to gain fresh adherents to the cause, and so the movement would grow like an avalanche until it had swept away state and society.

Among the wildest speakers there was one who caught my attention by his power of carrying the meeting irresistibly with him. He spoke with a certain cold cruelty, scornfully, but readily. He was an elegant young man with sword cuts on his pale cheeks, and hair like an artist. He inspired me with a shy admiration, for I was still but a poor speaker, and when he condescended to treat me as an intimate I felt myself honored indeed.

"We two will undertake the leadership," he said, as we finally went home, linking his arm with mine. "The others are only talking hot air and will drop off if they are not kept up to the mark. We old corps students are designed by Providence to bring some order among this unruly rabble."

The fact that he recognized me as his equal worked powerfully upon my self-esteem; only the fact that he took me for a corps student and did not immediately ask to what corps I belonged seemed to me a little strange. We determined to meet the next day at a respectable restaurant in the Hausvoigteiplatz, where one could get four courses, together with stewed plums and cheese *ad lib.* for Mk. 1.50 and settle the plan of campaign. By the time I had taken my seat opposite him with a racking headache, his brain had worked everything out. He would propose me as president at the meeting in the evening, and I was to insure, for my part, that he had a place by my side.

"As these poor devils have nothing," he continued, "we shall have to provide the necessary money to organize the business temporarily from our own pockets, but I have connections with the leaders of the Social Democrats, and I know that everything will be repaid us in full out of the party chest. In fact, I can assure you in confidence that we shall dispose of much larger sums as soon as we can point to a considerable body of supporters."

"How much will be necessary?" I asked, rather taken aback, for my five hundred rubles had already shrunk terribly.

"Well," he said, condescendingly, "if each of us gives the small amount of three hundred marks, that will do to begin with."

I breathed more freely, for I had that much and, indeed, rather more in my possession.

When this matter had been settled quite easily he laid before me the draft of a manifesto which was to be distributed among our fellow students at the evening meeting. I read it through and said quite openly that I found it rather feeble.

"You, as president, must of course settle the text," he replied. The waiter lent us a pencil, and I revised the draft with feverish zeal until his enthusiasm was also kindled.

One is either a poet or one is not, and I, thank God, *was* one.

"We must get that into the newspapers to-day," said my fellow conspirator, rousing himself to a kind of weary enthusiasm, "or better still, we must get it posted on all the advertisement pillars by to-morrow morning, and all Berlin will follow us."

My heart beat high. To be a popular leader, to hold

the heart of the capital in my hands, could there be anything greater in the world?

"I will take the manifesto off to a printing press at once," he continued, "and then——" He paused, deep in thought. "No, no, that won't do, for they don't know us, or as an alternative we might pay them what they want as an advance."

"Well, that we can do," I exclaimed, trembling with eagerness. Money was of no account at a moment so important to the world's history. "Very good," he said. "I assume that they will be satisfied with the sum I have mentioned. I will just make the necessary inquiries, and then come round to you and collect your contribution."

"Come with me at once," I said, "so as not to lose time."

"You are quite right," he said. "One can see at once that you have the necessary qualities for a leader." We therefore called a cab—money was of no account, as I have already said—drove to the Spandauer Brücke, and while he waited downstairs I collected with trembling hands the gold coins which were to be employed for the great work. He counted them hurriedly and drove off with them to Nauk & Hartmann, the printers, and then he left me. My cheeks burned as I thought over the speech which I was to make that evening. Neumann lay on his bed, reading Georg Brandes's *Tendencies*, a new epoch-making work which a young Danish genius recently had given forth to the world.

"What are you muttering to yourself?" he asked.

He had not been at the meeting the evening before, and therefore had no idea of the great trouble brewing, and I did not mean to tell him about it until the

sword which I had forged had dispersed the mist of conventional beliefs.

I, therefore, ran out to the Monbijou Platz, which was close at hand, where the nurses were not likely to be too inquisitive about what I was doing.

The evening came.

I entered the public house in which a large room was to be reserved for us, with a beating heart, and I inquired where the meeting was to take place.

"What meeting?" asked the waiter, in return.

"Why, the meeting which was announced for to-night."

"Yes, yes, quite so. I remember now, but nobody has come."

"But that is impossible."

"Well, look for yourself."

And he opened the door to a hall in which the wings of a small stage were lost in semidarkness, but the tables and seats were entirely empty.

"But the gentleman who ordered the hall, himself, where is he?"

"Have a look through the other rooms. Perhaps he is there."

I looked through the other rooms and I waited for several hours, but he did not come, and I never saw him again.

I had meanwhile not succeeded in hearing anything at all about the fate of my play.

I waited and waited, but the reply for which I watched so anxiously would not come.

The theater season was now drawing to a close, and so I determined to do something desperate. I put on the frock coat which the village tailor, Paetzel, had made for me, in strict accordance with the fashion

papers, for solemn occasions. And thus equipped, I proceeded to the Blumenstrasse, not far from the Residenz Theater, where the address book informed me Herr Direktor Emil Claar had his home.

I was duly announced and was shown into a room which glowed with the gorgeous colors of Oriental curtains.

A man of medium height, with a shock of reddish-blond hair and wide-open collar, came forward to meet me with a genial but business-like air.

"What can I do for you, Mr. ——?"

"My name is Hermann Sudermann," I replied, with a certain amount of gentle emphasis.

But it did not evoke the expected response.

"Quite so, and ——?"

"I sent you the manuscript of a play some months ago, but I have not yet had any news of your acceptance of it."

"Indeed! Indeed! Yes? Well, that happens sometimes, but the deficiency shall be made good at once. Everything which comes into my office is most carefully examined, and we keep everything of which we can make any use. May I ask you for your address?"

I repeated my name and added my address, all of which he carefully noted.

"You shall have a reply by return of post, you may rely on that."

And with that I was dismissed.

I returned to my own quarter of the town with my mind at ease. Everything was now quite clear to me. Owing to some oversight, my manuscript had not yet received the attention which it deserved, but now it would be dragged forth from its hiding place, they would read it with wonder, and send me news of its

acceptance at once. I might even hear of my good fortune the very next morning.

But days and weeks went by without bringing me a letter with the stamp of the Residenz Theater on it. So I put on my frock coat again and trod the way I knew so well to the Blumenstrasse. The director again received me with the same ready geniality.

"What can I do for you?"

"I took the liberty some time ago, Herr Director, of coming to see you to inquire as to the fate of a anuscript which I had sent you."

"Quite so. I remember now. Quite right. And you have not received it? That is a piece of incomprehensible carelessness on the part of my office which shall be put right at once. You must allow me to apologize."

"Please don't mention it," I replied, with dignity. "I may therefore reckon with certainty that I shall get my manuscript back?"

"I give you my word that you shall, Herr Silbermann."

He pressed my hand with bewitching heartiness, accompanied me himself to the door, and closed it himself so politely behind me that I felt justified in allowing my hopes to revive again.

The next day a packet with the stamp of the Residenz Theater lay on my table. It contained my manuscript, but its shape had become curiously narrower and smaller.

The director had kept his promise; he had said:

"We keep everything of which we can make any use." And so they had. They had cut off the beautiful broad wide margins, but they had kindly returned me all the rest.

I thought at first that I should meet this disappointment of all my hopes with indifference, and it was not

till later that I realized that with my hopes had disappeared the possibility of continuing my studies. The money which I had received from Russia was all spent, but for a small sum, and I was farther off than ever from the goal imposed upon me by necessity.

Since I had realized that the methods of teaching modern languages only made me more and more stupid, I had given myself up entirely to idleness, and that in a fashion which cut at the roots of all self-discipline and which had not even a justification in a kind of social conscience, as had still been the case while I was with the Lithuanians.

Neumann had a friend called Bodky, who was absolutely necessary to us to form a third at *skat*. We, therefore, used to take him, for the sake of convenience, when we returned after a beer prowl which had lasted all night, straight up to our room, and made him up a bed on the sofa, so that he was immediately available when we awoke to carry on our game of *skat*.

This was no way to make progress, even if, when one was left alone in the afternoon, one endeavored to justify one's helplessness against the crowd of vampire-like impressions by writing revolutionary poems full of melancholy.

One was a devil, no doubt, but a devil without money and who *only* drank beer and played *skat* could not take himself seriously.

I also had pains in my chest and I had found blood on my handkerchief. I was then condemned to death, after all.

Perhaps Angela had waited until now to draw me after her, or perhaps the nights which I had spent in drinking and idling were beginning to revenge themselves. Who could tell?

Fortunately, love left me alone. I was proof against the women of the street who sprang up like marsh flowers at every corner, and the other experiences which one can usually have in any great city had not had much effect on me.

The girl with the eager eyes, the daughter of the cobbler next door, who was only too glad to be enticed up to our room, had been soundly thrashed by her father and no longer ventured to visit us. A tall, slender nurse in the Monbijou Park was at most a goddess to whom one could dedicate platonic lyrics.

The only person who seemed likely to be able to gratify a "devilish" passion was the mature lady opposite, who, when she was not powdering herself in front of her looking glass, sat behind her curtains with a field glass. She did not seem to be at all averse from the attractions of the sign language, and had twice met me at a confectioner's shop in the Rosenthaler-strasse, and the storm of unchained passion might have swept on in its destructive course had it not happened that one afternoon while I was writing I was compelled to look out of the window by the unmusical shrieking of a parrot. A golden cage stood on the window sill of my inamorata, and the bird in it shrieked, in a voice which carried far above the noise of the street, proclaiming to all the world the tender confession:

"I love my *vis à vis*."

I dimly remembered that I had heard these words before at various times, without, however, paying attention to them, and it gradually became clear to me that the parrot had a permanent position as a kindly go-between who had probably generously performed this office to many of my predecessors.

Then I cooled off and no longer paid any attention

to the attractions opposite. The lady soon noticed this and gave up her attempts to ensnare me, but the parrot still continued unmoved to scream his confession to the world at large.

One day I counted up the money which I had left and found that it was nearly at an end. The sum which I had sacrificed to German freedom would have been sufficient to keep my head above water for another three months, but now I saw absolutely nothing before me.

But far, far off on the Russian frontier, in the most God-forsaken corner of Germany, I still had a home waiting for me. No matter how unwilling my father had been to allow me to adopt the career I had chosen, he had not yet refused me shelter under his roof.

I thought that if I spent the rest of my money in purchasing the text-books which my professors mentioned with great respect in every lecture, I should have no difficulty at all in making up by private study the information which I could not possibly get into my head during the lectures. If I spend a winter term in unbroken work at them I thought, I would manage to satisfy the most extravagant requirements of the seminars.

And then I remembered that I was suffering from lung trouble. So much the better. Then I should at least be buried in my native earth, my mother would shed tears over my grave, and sometimes a girl would come there in the twilight—only I did not really know which girl, for since Ottilie Settegast had been the queen of my virgin heart, my other loves had all been away from home.

But perhaps, after all, my life would be spared me, and to provide for this eventuality, after laying aside the necessary money for my journey, I went to Meyer

& Müller's bookshop and bought those extremely learned books (they still adorn my Blankensee bookshelves) in which the history of old French dialects and the transition from Anglo-Saxon to Old English are described in the most masterly fashion. I felt that their possession made my future safe, even if my poetic gifts had to be laid aside for the present.

One hazy, hot August morning I again took my place on the omnibus which in the spring had carried me toward my happiness.

There was one fact which I could not conceal from myself. My first attempt to conquer Berlin had failed.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STUDENT WHO HAD WASTED HIS TIME

THE mignonettes and the stocks in my mother's garden had withered, and one morning even the asters, caught by the first night frost, hung their heads in death.

It was autumn again, but this autumn there was no cheery departure, no proud leave-taking of one ready to take up the battle anew, as had been the case year after year and as other people were permitted to do. Far otherwise, it was an autumn of despondency, of frozen hope, in which I felt deserted by the world.

Go on studying? A great idea, but how was it to be achieved?

I could always be certain of my food at home, but there was no more money to send me to another university.

My father did not know how he was to pay for the barley which he needed for his next month's brewing, and anyone who wished to play the great gentleman must try to pay for this pleasure himself. If I had made up my mind to go off all the same, I could not have raised even the price for a ticket to Berlin. When I celebrated my twentieth birthday on the 30th September, my mother laid a little package shamefacedly on my birthday table. It contained six whole marks.

"I have not been able to save more," she said, with tears in her eyes, and I ran hastily out of the room so that she should not see the tears in mine.

At twenty, when other people are just beginning their lives, mine was already finished.

No, not quite. The magic books with the philological formulæ lay upstairs in the gable room which, since my grandmother's death and the departure of my brothers to seek their fortune in the world, I had all to myself, and in which I could work as hard as I liked as many hours as there were in the day.

And I worked with unbounded energy. I was up at four, bending over the old French formulæ and endeavoring to hammer them into my memory. The lamp which had been freshly filled late in the evening burned white, the early red of dawn gradually turned its flame to orange, and I grew hungry for breakfast, but none the less I swayed to and fro, muttering to myself, endeavoring to learn those formulæ by heart hour after hour.

A student who had never met with any real difficulty except perhaps in Latin, and that owing to bad teaching, a hero who (What a splendid memory it was!) had mastered the whole of geography within fourteen hours, must surely succeed, I thought, in getting this stupid rubbish into his head.

But it was all in vain. What I succeeded in learning one day was forgotten the next.

Then I began to be doubtful whether I was not going out of my mind. Perhaps as a result of the amount of beer I had drunk, and especially the habit of drinking all night, my memory and powers of attention had gone to the dogs and I was slowly becoming an idiot. Softening of the brain was a disease which one could run across everywhere, and I could see no reason why it should spare me in particular.

By way of a thorough test I learned the English text of "Macbeth" by heart, and, lo and behold! I

could repeat it fluently after a week, so it could not be softening of the brain.

But what about the pains in my chest? Obviously my lung trouble was getting worse.

I used to wander about the churchyard a great deal, and sat on my grandmother's grave, at that time the only one which belonged to our family. One could never tell how soon mine would lie alongside of it, and it was just as well to cultivate neighborly relations in good time.

I had ceased to cough up blood, but the sense of oppression in my chest had increased.

Then I took my courage in both hands and went to see our doctor. He made me strip, looked at my chest, and laughed.

"You have a chest like a professional wrestler," he said, "but we shall have a look at you all the same."

And when he had gone over me thoroughly he laughed again.

"If you do not accidentally perish of hypochondria," he said, "you will live to be a hundred."

I was bitterly hurt and defended myself. Then he asked me what kind of a life I had lived during the summer and how I was living at present.

"It's very simple," he said. "First of all you have idled far too much, and now you are working far too hard. It is only a poor country doctor who can manage to put up with four hours in bed, in the long run, and he makes up for it by going to sleep in his carriage. Make up your arrears of sleep thoroughly and I will guarantee that you are cured in a week."

And he was right. I packed my consumption off to the devil, but my philology accompanied it, for by the light of day, if my will power did not drive me to it with a red-hot goad, it became more and more clear

to me that this learning by heart was madness, and one day I said to myself:

"In this fashion, you will never force your way into the secrets of this science. The only result can be that you will go mad. Throw these 'magic books' into the corner and do what you feel inclined to."

My first idea, of course, was to write.

Write! Easily said, but what?

In those days writing was not so simple as it appears to the youth of to-day. To-day it is sufficient to allow one's imagination to wander up and down the flowery meadows of the German language as fancy directs the flow of thoughts, and to put together a brilliantly variegated nosegay from whatever one comes across. But in those days the masters of literature had laid down stringent rules for the tying of literary posies, the neglect of which was met inevitably with scorn and outlawry or, what was worse, laughing neglect. For the critics and the writers were in agreement in those days and between them had built a wall around Parnassus, at the strongly guarded door of which only he could dare to knock who could prove that he was of true heroic descent. The enzyme in a young writer either fermented itself into putrefaction or by slow degrees it worked out the yeast and came to the light of day when it had become clear and thin, as the taste of that day demanded.

In my nature, however, impetuosity and lack of skill were engaged in a mad battle. I foamed with fury against the narrowness of the forms prescribed, and yet I felt flattered when I got a perfect strophe.

Then, too, I had no great subjects to write about. Smitten with blindness, I did not realize that all around me in Lithuania the folksong which we Germans have kept alive as a precious inheritance

from past ages was growing up afresh and blooming around me every day, that it was singing and ringing about me on every road with a creative force which only needed to be gathered together to bring forth the finest fruit even on German soil.

I was so close to the original source of poetry that I had only to stoop to it to be able to drink to satiety for half my life. And instead of this I wandered up and down the literature of all times in the search for motifs which other men had long since spat out.

And what was true of lyric poetry was equally true of narrative. Models swarmed around me every day, begging me to give them shape, outline, and color, demanding that I should form into shapes as yet unheard of the roughly tinted story of their destinies, and meanwhile I was crying miserably over the bad luck which compelled me to live without experience or inspiration in this out-of-the-way corner. I dreamed of tremendous sins, of criminal passions which existed somewhere out there where the great world spread its peacock's tail, and meanwhile there fermented in front of my house door an unlimited store of folly and tragedy with all their heated and poisonous potions. But I knew it not.

Then it happened that a tragedy which affected my own life apparently shook me to the depths of my being.

Ottilie Settegast shot herself.

I had not seen her since childhood, but my memory preserved for her a place in the innermost shrine of my heart. Had I met her again I think I should not have hesitated to fall in love with her again, so hungry was I for love.

And now she was dead—had taken a pistol loaded with blank out of the armory one afternoon when

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everybody was asleep, had gone off to her mother's grave, and fired the wad into her head.

The reason was pitiable enough. There was a young assistant with "Italian eyes" which were regarded as a peculiar beauty in this country where the Slavonic and Germanic blond types prevail, who loitered behind the counter of a large general store at Heydekrug, which was owned by her uncle Schmidt. In the course of her purchases on market days she had fallen in love with him, had not concealed her feelings from him, and had encouraged him, an ordinary grocer's assistant, to have the impertinence to ask for the hand of the daughter of a wealthy landed proprietor. Not unnaturally he was thrown out, and, as he was a rough and conceited boor, he revenged himself by hurling scorn and abuse at the unfortunate girl's hopeless passion, when he was drinking or gambling in the circle of his chosen companions. Ottilie was informed of this by a seamstress. Then she went out silently and shot herself.

I now had the great tragic subject for which I had been longing, and I worked it up to such emotional heights as if I had always loved the poor girl and as if I myself were to blame for her death. It seemed to me that I should never recover from this terrible sorrow. I gave up eating, I could not sleep, but wandered all day long in the woods and composed verses. By night I sat at my writing table and composed verses. But there was unfortunately only one rhyme for Ottilie, and that is "lily," for I could obviously not use "family" and words of that kind. And this poverty of rhymes finally dried up the wealth of my imagination. I have now only a number of bad verses to testify to the storm which I worked up artificially to such a height in those days. I should

have paid a purer and more honest tribute to the memory of the dear child had I passed by her sad fate in silence.

But I had to have my great tragic experience, even if I had to fetch the fire for it in a Promethean tube from heaven.

I looked around me at the women in the neighborhood, for this time it had to be a *woman*. Had I fallen in love with a girl, it would have ended inevitably with the banality of an engagement. And I found what I was looking for.

There was among the superior officials, of whom there are between twelve and twenty-four in every district town (I do not wish to be more precise, even after forty years), a man who had recently been transferred to our neighborhood and whom I had got to know as a drinker with a head of teak and a fund of amusing stories. Shortly after I got to know his family, and one day I was invited to a tea and dance. It was thus that I met her who was henceforth to be the goddess of my dreams. Her picture has become rather blurred with time. I only know that she was tall and slender and had those graceful lines without which I cannot imagine forming a poetic passion for a woman. She spoke kindly to me, as, indeed, she did to everybody else, for she was the hostess, but behind this smiling kindness, which seemed to be a little tired, I felt that some dark tragedy must be concealed, and who else could be responsible for it but that wicked cynic, her husband (this was the metamorphosis which my hitherto harmless companion of the beer table had undergone), who had compelled her to follow him through a commonplace existence? And who was destined to break her chains and to lead her to the happiness of a life worthy of her true self?

Who but myself, who had been brought into her circle as her savior?

When I landed up in my gable room after this party, at about four in the morning, my fiery verses flowed as readily as the newly born volcano in my heart bade them flow.

What more shall I say? I have no difficulty in recognizing to-day that that wild summer night which robbed me of my soul's virginity had had some far-reaching effects and was also responsible for this stupid and impertinent fantasy. It is fortunate that she who was the heroine of these dreams never knew of them. Otherwise, there would have been a speedy end to my cuddling in my family, whose standard of morals was of the narrowest. But just for this reason I was the readier to collect material in silence to adorn lovingly the fateful castle of my dreams with every ornament. The hour of stunning recognition, the hour of the dumb admission of our common need, words as tremendous as an earthquake, and, finally, agreement, flight, and death together. Thus and no otherwise could the great work on which the Norns were now laboring, or rather, on which I was laboring, end. Day and night, in verse and prose, wandering in the woods with a glowing head, lying on the snow in the churchyard—mad as a hatter.

So it went on for months, until even my inexperienced eyes could not help noticing the obvious fact that the ruler of my heart was expecting an addition to her family, and this brought me to my senses. I was not disappointed in her exactly, but I had to admit that there was no chance of my dramatic entry on the scene for some months to come. Later on, I helped to celebrate the arrival of a lusty youngster, in the prosaic surroundings of our beer circle; yes, I

even sank as low as that. And that night, when I returned home in a high state of excitement, I had to confess to myself that it was not the woman herself whom I had loved so madly and hopelessly, but the fact that I needed a woman and that she had served me as a chance specimen on whom to hang my thoughts.

And all the time there was a chance of happiness, glowing, ready for anything, even though it were a sin, close beside me, and I didn't know it. But that comes later.

My home was overshadowd with gloom at that time. My father, who was nearly sixty, could no longer carry out the hard physical work which his calling demanded from him, and my second brother, who had come to help him, had gone off again into the world, to seek a fortune which he did not find. Besides, his efforts were all in vain. My father's customers diminished and his debts increased and he went about silently with staring eyes, as if he were seeing ghosts. And then, of course, to add to his troubles, he had me on his back.

I am afraid that I was not a pleasant person to live with. If I had a son who came to table in his dressing gown, with the head of a kitten sticking out of either pocket, I think I should send him packing that very day. Yes, well I can still see myself, and I can understand the disgust very well with which my father regarded me every day and which caused him to turn away from me every time we had dinner.

Then, I remember one dinner at which I was properly dressed for once and had no kittens with me. As usual, we sat, all four of us, absolutely silent at the table. My father sighed and worried over his troubles, as usual. And then there was the devil of a

row about nothing; to be precise, about an unnecessary napkin, an article which seemed to him an unnecessary tempting of Providence. I don't remember exactly what it was. And then he scolded my mother and all of us and reproached himself for making life impossible for other people, for we were face to face with ruin and we should all end by having to beg our bread.

And there was that good-for-nothing son of his who, instead of earning his bread, loitered about at night, when he wasn't producing rubbish which brought in nothing. It was thus that he rounded off his grumble against life in general with an attack on me.

I ought, as usual, to have left the room in a state of indignation, but I saw the despair in his eyes, and—although I do not to-day know whence I summoned up the courage, for we were accustomed to have nothing to do with each other all day long until it came to saying "Good night,"—I went over to him, put my arm round his neck, and said:

"Father, we are all up against it. Must we really make ourselves still more miserable by getting angry with one another?"

I have never forgotten the shy yet tortured look of astonishment with which he looked at me. I could see that his first impulse was to be indignant with me for daring to do such a thing; then it was as if the faint glimmering of a world which was gentler, better, and much more loving had dawned on his consciousness and showed itself in his features, which always looked as if they had been carved out of oak, and with a snort which sounded like a sob he flung the door open and was gone.

The others looked at me in dismay, and my brother Otto said to me: "Don't do that again. Another time, it may turn out quite differently."

But my heart was light, and when we met again at supper I had the satisfaction of having my father engage in friendly conversation with me. That had not happened to me for a long time.

By degrees my nature began to expand and become aware of its strength, in spite of its troubles, poverty, and folly. My days acquired a backbone of properly thought out and properly divided work, and my nights stretched themselves out by lamplight until the morning. I drew into myself everything which I could win from science, without definite choice or rule, but with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, but I kept aloof from the books which dealt with my proper sphere of knowledge, with a kind of horror.

I had to rely on the bookshelves of the families with whom I was on visiting terms for *belles lettres*, while the *Periodical Circle* which provided us dwellers in the backwoods with the spiritual food which we required, did me an additional service in keeping me abreast of the times.

One of the writers whose novels I devoured at that time held me completely captive. His name was Hans Hopfen. I had read some verses by him while I was at Königsberg, which had remained in my memory, such as, "Sweetheart, let thy questions be," and other poems. Then I came across a story which had an extraordinary likeness to the events of *that* summer evening and which I therefore kept for myself, and, finally, I felt that all my efforts and longings had already found their fulfillment in this stranger poet. I found within me a secret but imperious necessity to confide in him as though he were an elder brother or a friend, to tell him all the misery which I felt in having come to a standstill, and to look to him for help, a necessity which would not be silenced.

I hunted out the stories which I thought the best, copied them out in my best handwriting, and added a letter, many pages in length, in which I wrote as the spirit moved me.

I took the fat envelope off to the post office with a beating heart. I did not know his address, but I felt that "Berlin" would be sufficient. Famous people are, after all, easy enough to find.

My letter found him all right, although it took considerable time, and one day I found on my table the fine brown envelope, made of the finest hand-made paper, with the masterful, imperious, upright, handwriting, but I felt that he had at last come to the rescue and that I was delivered from my bonds.

Well, what had he to say about me? "Your poems do not appeal to me," or words to that effect. "There are plenty of youngsters who have written much better stuff at twenty and then have come to naught, and others who have done worse and subsequently made good and done great work. The factor which moves me to think that you may some day achieve something is your accompanying letter, which has not failed of its effect. In view of the interest which it has aroused in me, I shall be only too pleased to help you. Write me more about yourself and let me know how I can be most useful to you."

I cannot tell you how great the happiness was which this lightning stroke of fortune brought me. I was suddenly raised from the deepest and darkest despair to those sunny heights on which only the chosen spirits of humanity are permitted to wander, and I could not see that I had deserved so much grace from Destiny.

I raced up and down the wintry roads, laughing and crying, spouting rhymes and declaiming, sometimes

half the night and sometimes half the day, inspired by only one thought, "How can you prove yourself worthy of such a blessing?"

But I felt the necessity of an honest confession. It seemed to me to be a sacred duty to lay plainly before my savior the dangerous wildness of my nature. I felt that until he knew all the troubles which I had to deal with, all the battles I had to go through, all the contradictions in my character, he would not be in a position to raise me to his level, and I did not hesitate to tell him, confidentially, all that I had omitted from my first letter about myself.

I told him I was a red-hot revolutionary, an atheist, a materialist. I would have added, had I only known Nietzsche, a would-be "transformer of all moral values," ready, I felt, to suffer shame and death for the liberation of the enslaved proletariat. All this I laid before him, humbly and yet proudly, and all to the tune of a heart which I felt beat in sympathy with mine.

I should have been a great deal more careful had I had the remotest idea that his heart beat for the divine right of kings, for the rule of the squirarchy, and for the most complete Bismarckian absolutism.

The only effect of my confession was that nothing more happened. The months of that long, hard winter went by without the postman bringing another of those fine, brown, hand-made envelopes to the youngster who was waiting for it with bated breath. The spring was far advanced and the student who had idled away his time, and who had long since been struck off the lists of the University of Berlin "for idleness," armed himself—he wished he knew wherewith he could arm himself—to wander abroad again and take up his work again, bravely. Then there

suddenly arrived a totally unexpected envelope, with Italian stamps, horribly crumpled and containing a few lines written in pencil.

They ran as follows:

While tidying up my papers, I have come across your second letter. I have lost my dearly beloved wife in Rome. She liked you. I am now returning to Germany. When you next come to Berlin, look me up. We will then see what we can do.

Yours, H. H.

I thus found a bottom again in which my hope could find anchorage. I mourned for the dead woman as if I had known and respected her for a long time, but how deeply would I have mourned her had I but known what a fine woman annihilation had taken to its bosom. And had it not been for my foolish confessions, I might have spent the winter in gazing on the greatest wonders of the world instead of spending it snowed up in my out-of-the-way neck of the woods, for it was her wish that I should come to Rome as tutor to her children, when my stupid revolutionary outburst brought the scheme to naught.

I learned all this later. My immediate problem was to scrape the money together to get to Berlin and hold out for a time there.

I set out one morning, holding my breath, on a round from one house to another of people whom I knew, to see if I could raise a shamefaced loan. But at the first house, a family from whom I thought I might reckon on assistance with certainty, I was shown out with a short, "No." I crept into the market place again like a whipped dog, and swore that I would rather starve than ask for another humiliation of that kind.

It was a stroke of luck, a great and never-to-be-forgotten stroke, that old Settegast gave me a handful

of solid thalers at my departure, in payment for the help which I had given him during the winter on market days—for I still knew the whereabouts of every bottle and the contents of every drawer. It was just enough to pay my fare fourth class.

Then my mother began to see what she could raise. First of all she went to an old, rich doctor's widow of whom it was said that she lent money to those who needed it, at a high rate of interest. She also was ready at once to lay ten bright thalers on the table, and when my mother asked with a beating heart how high the interest would be, she only shook her head and said that my mother need not worry about such trifles. It would be more than sufficient if she got the money back when it was convenient to repay it.

And this benefactress is long since dead. The last time I visited my home and walked round the churchyard to enjoy the exquisite sensation of reviving old memories, I found in a corner a heap of crosses which were no longer being used, for the graves to which they belonged had been cleared to make room for other pilgrims who needed a resting place. And on one of these crosses I read the half-obliterated name of the lady, who will soon be forgotten.

My mother brought back her booty, beaming with joy. Many another thaler was added to those famous ten. People who owed money for milk did not fail to receive notice that it must be paid. Good friends of hers scraped together their savings, and there were even two coronation thalers, a coin which was otherwise only regarded as a curiosity, and finally my father also brought me a small contribution. I did not want to take it at first, for I knew well how great his sacrifice was, but he said:

"You had better keep it; it will, anyway, be the last that your father can give you."

And it was the last.

The day of departure drew near.

I had said good-by to everybody, and I must say, without much regret. Even as I raised the hand of my latest divinity to my lips my heart did not beat the quicker. So swiftly can a passion dissolve into nothing. There was not even a picture which I could carry away with me in the innermost shrine of my heart.

I had only to go to the churchyard to say good-by to my grandmother, and then I was ready.

And then, as I was walking along between the rows of graves, to which the afternoon sun, which had already a touch of warmth in it, lent a sense of peace, a dark form came to meet me—a girl, tall, slender, and vivid, with a firm but springy walk, such as only those who have reached maturity possess.

I knew her well. She had been one of the partners I liked best, although she was considerably older than I was, but I had never learned more of her or become more intimate than one does through the nonsense one talks at a dance. Perhaps because her pride had held me back. She was on a visit to a married sister, and it was said that she was soon leaving the town, but I did not know more about her than that.

We both stopped, and as I had not seen her the day before when I had called to say good-by to her sister, I permitted myself to repeat in person the polite expressions of regret which I had given to her sister at not seeing her to say good-by.

She nodded with condescension, as befitted somebody so unimportant as myself. And then I asked her what had brought her to the churchyard. As far as I knew, she had no relatives laid to rest there.

"I find the dead pleasanter company than the living," she said.

But when I begged her pardon and offered to leave her in peace she turned red and said that she had not meant it in that sense, and if I had time we might as well walk a little way together.

I thanked her, and as the wood was close at hand we climbed down on the other side, instead of going back by the ordinary road, through the graves of the churchyard and the brushwood which lay beyond, from which a path shaded with pines led back to the village.

The snow still lay in the lower ground and hollows, but close to the snow the chærophyllum and lamium were beginning to turn green, while farther on, where the wood began, the moss and bilberry bushes were as bright as though we were already in the middle of June.

I had a wild desire to play the part of the perfect cavalier. I outdid myself in little acts of politeness, and assured her with a meaning glance that I should never forget all my life long the happy hours which I had spent in her company.

"I must say," she replied, measuring me with a side glance, the searching earnestness of which made me feel bitterly ashamed, "that you never gave me the impression that they were so very happy."

I stammered out a question as to what she meant.

"Well—we both had little enough to do in this dull little corner," she replied, and as she spoke she looked me full in the face with a bitter smile.

"Well, my case is simple enough," I replied, giving up all the cavalier nonsense. "I had no money."

"My case is just as simple," she replied, laughing. "I had no home."

"But surely you have a home with your sister," I returned.

"But do you think that is enough?" she asked.

I replied, with the reserve that the situation demanded, that that was a subject on which, of course, I could form no opinion.

"Do you know at which parties you pleased me most?" she asked me, suddenly changing the subject.

"No. Which?"

"Those to which you were not invited."

I thanked her for her unkind remark.

"For when I drove past your house in my sleigh at three o'clock in the morning," she continued, undisturbed, "I always saw a light in your gable window. And then I envied you. Once or twice when I saw that the window was in darkness I was not able to get to sleep properly afterward. I asked myself perpetually, 'Has he given up working so hard?' And then I felt as if you had robbed me of a hope."

I stared at her. In the course of our walk she had turned her face so directly toward me that I could study every feature of it, and I thought that I had never really seen her before. Her great brown eyes, which rested on me with smiling insistence, seemed to be lighted from within with a golden light, and an urgent command seemed to lie upon her full firm lips.

It seemed to me that I was quite small and helpless before her masterful superiority, which was, however, no more than gentle sympathy. And then I stammered out something about the unexpected happiness which I felt that she should have been so kind as to bother about me.

"But why not?" she replied. "Were we not companions in misery?" And then she began to talk quite freely about herself.

"I am eight and twenty and getting on. . . . I have got to marry at any price. . . . That is why I am sent round. . . . If there is a good match anywhere, then I have to appear on the scene, and if nothing comes of it then the business begins all over again. I have two sisters and two aunts and they take it in turns to keep me, for they all are terribly afraid that I shall be an old maid and then I shall be on their backs forever. I have never learned to do anything. We were brought up too fine for that. . . . The only thing I could become would be housekeeper, say to an old widower, or it might even be a bachelor who might take a fancy to me. And even though he is already gray and pimply, one is expected to thank God for him, for marriage is the only career which is open to one."

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed, overpowered by this sudden confidence. "How can you think such desperate thoughts, and if I were not so poor and so inexperienced I should have courted you like all the others."

"Yes, would you?" with a little smile of satisfaction. "But I am afraid that I am only intended for gentlemen in a fixed position, and I do so badly need a little youth and a little folly, and I know not what else—it may be as wicked as it likes . . . anything to get away from the eternal questions: 'Is he in earnest or not? Does he mean it seriously?' . . . If my beloved relatives only knew how I always managed to evade its ever becoming serious they would be able to understand many things better than they do. . . . Oh, these men in fixed positions! Brrr!"

And she shuddered, while a laugh as if of relief broke from her lips.

"How young must one be, then," I asked, "to win your favor?"

"What do you mean by the word favor," she asked, in return, "marriage or love?"

"Can that not be one and the same thing?"

"Not in my case. It is not a question of age entirely. It must be somebody as lonely as myself, somebody who is, like myself, in perpetual struggle with his destiny. He must be as hopeless as I am, so that he can say to me, 'If you will not be my hope, then I have no other.' *That* is what he must be like."

"If you did not think me a fool," I replied, "your description might well apply to me."

"That is why I told you that we are companions in misery," she burst out at me. "If you had only sat once by me during the winter instead of making up to that little blonde"—and here she mentioned the name of a partner who meant as little to me as a stone which we were passing—"we should soon have known how we ought to stand to each other."

"Well, thank goodness, we can easily remedy that," I said, and pointed to the bilberry bushes which filled the side of the wood.

She laughed clearly and threw herself at full length on the ground, while the long rays of the sinking sun bathed her in light. She lay there as if asleep, with her crossed arms behind her head, and my heart beat while I stood looking down at her.

"First of all you ask me to sit down, and then you don't come yourself," she said, raising herself up. And it was not till then that I dared to sit down close to her.

"Now tell me about yourself," she said, encouragingly.

"There is not much to tell about myself," I replied. "Everybody knows what I am and what I should like to be."

"Yes, people call you 'the student who has wasted his time,'" she said, "and that has often made me cross. But now it is up to you to prove the contrary."

I knew well enough that people had called me this, but it hurt me very much to hear it so unexpectedly from her. I felt despondent and became silent, and when she noticed this she appeared to be no less troubled herself.

"I thought that you were of harder stuff," she said, "and could laugh at your name."

"I have had a hard time," I replied, "and when one incurs contempt as well . . ."

"But not mine," she cried.

"Yes, yours, too," I replied, "otherwise you would have found other words for me.

And then the tears must have come into my eyes, for she suddenly sat close beside me and wiped my eyes and cheeks with her pocket handkerchief.

"Please don't, please don't, please don't," she whispered. "If we had only had a good talk before, instead of hopping around so foolishly, the whole terrible time would have been quite different. We should certainly have fallen in love with each other, and the world might go hang for all we should have cared."

"How could we have loved each other?" I replied. "I am nothing and have nothing."

"That's just why!" Her voice rang like a cry of triumph. "The gentlemen with fixed positions—the widowers with children, the played-out bachelors—will all come soon enough."

We laughed these two hated classes of humanity to scorn, and then we began to picture to ourselves how everything would have been if we had really loved each other.

"As soon as we met at a party," she said, "we should have exchanged a secret look as soon as the other came into the room, and no matter with whom we were talking or with whom we were dancing, we should have been there entirely to ourselves."

"And we should have arranged to take secret walks," I continued, "just like our walk to-day. We could have used the churchyard as our rendezvous, for nobody else comes there in winter. And then we should have gone right off into the woods through storm and snowdrift and we should never have been cold and never got tired."

"And *if we had*," she cried, "then we should have gone into some little village inn and drunk hot grog, or, better, the Schnapps which the Lithuanian peasants make. What fun it would have been!"

"But supposing somebody had recognized us?" I put in, anxiously.

"Oh, but nobody would have recognized us," she said, soothingly.

"Ah, but they would," I maintained, for as her protector I was responsible for her. "There are always people we know driving along the roads. Landed proprietors in the neighborhood, and shop people who have to travel on business, and lots of other people, too. . . . No, no! that would have been too dangerous by daylight."

"Well then we should have to take our walks when it was dark," she mused, "before supper, or perhaps even later." Her voice sank and her eyes grew large with a spirit of adventure. "Yes, later, when the others had gone to sleep, and then nobody could have recognized us."

"But how could you have got out of the house unnoticed?" I asked.

"I live at the back," she replied, "and there is a special door in the gable close to my room, so that one can always get out at night."

"Or anyone could come in," I said. It was no question, nor did any wish or desire underlie it. I had just mentioned it by way of completing my vision of the house. And then I saw that her features seemed to have turned to stone and that a wild resolve dawned in her eyes.

She turned quite pale and repeated, "And—anyone —could—come—in."

But then, as if she wished to remove the impression of what she had just said, she hurriedly continued to describe the advantages we should have gained had we but loved each other.

"We should have read all our books together. We should have lent each other papers, and we should have written down what we thought out by ourselves and pressed it secretly into each other's hands."

"And I should have asked your judgment on all the verses and all the material for plays"—this was my contribution—"which came into my head. And then I should never have gone wrong."

So we sat opposite each other with our hands round our knees, and sometimes we exchanged a gentle grip, but we did not dare to hold hands for long or to come closer together.

And then, when we could think of nothing more to make that good time still more beautiful, we both fell silent. Our eyes sought the ground. It was as if we had nothing more to talk about, but our silence meant just two words which each of us repeated inwardly, and they were, "Too late!"

"Too late." What a pity! If I had only used my eyes instead of nourishing artificially that stupid and

childish passion it would all have been different, and instead of being a beggar, as I was, I could have gone forward to meet the hard time ahead of me, a rich man.

Suddenly the sun sank, and immediately we found that we were ice cold, for the ground was still saturated.

We got up shivering and stared into each other's eyes, for she was nearly as tall as I was. This was the moment for us to embrace, but we did not do so.

"When do you go?" she asked, softly.

"To-morrow morning," I replied.

"Then this is farewell?"

"I fear so."

Our eyes could not meet; each felt that it need not be farewell, and yet it was so because neither of us could utter the passionate and guilty word which would have released us.

And in silence we went home.

When we reached the road near the churchyard we met a group of mutual acquaintances, and there was an interchange of friendly greeting and a few inquisitive questions as to where we had met and where we had been.

"We met by accident in the churchyard," she said, and I could only confirm her statement.

And so we parted. . . .

I never saw or heard of her again. When I came back a few years later on, her relatives had been transferred to the Empire, nobody knew exactly where.

I advise those who still survive and remember that time not to worry about the name of my companion. I have masked her so carefully that nobody can recognize her.

It will be enough if she recognizes herself again, and if she is still alive perhaps she will write to me.

CHAPTER XV

MY BED ON THE BOARDS

WHO knows where the Auguststrasse is? There are not many inhabitants of the West End of Berlin who know those distant districts in which the poor, untroubled by the laws with which fashion and luxury have blessed the world, regard the struggle for their daily bread as the pursuit of happiness.

The street lies in the neighborhood of the Rosenthaler Tor and the Koppenplatz, gray, dark, and almost deserted, for the main streams of business traffic pass it by.

I found a shelter in No. 36, a tenement house which was clean and respectable according to the standards prevailing in North Berlin. For the greater convenience of the inmates, a pawnbroker's shop flourished in the courtyard, and every time that I came in at the door and was reminded of its proximity by the garish sign which announced its business, I hastily grasped that portion of my anatomy where a round hard projection gave me the comforting reassurance that I still possessed a watch.

And then, one day—— But of that anon.

On the topmost story, the gray-slated line of the roof was broken by gable windows, and one of these, the one on the left-hand corner, was my observation post, my watch tower, from which I could look down, like a monarch, on the world below me.

In the niche of this window there stood a table

covered with American cloth, a table from which I hoped to make this world below me my subject and at which I was meanwhile preserved from its dangers. The room was narrow and you could cover it in five strides. There was just room for a bed, a cupboard, and a chest of drawers, which was squeezed into the corner by the stove, and which also served as a washstand.

The rent was twelve marks a month, including service and coffee in the morning. It was the cheapest accommodation I could have found, and at the same time it was the most fortunate environment that a kindly destiny could have given me, for the little group of people with whom I came in contact as the tenant of the room were for a long time the kindest and most devoted friends, under whose protection I was safe from the terrors of the unknown

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ran the oval porcelain sign in the hall which extended a friendly invitation to all who needed clothes to enter. And it was really worth while doing so, for the gray-haired man with the drooping mustache and the weak, rather embarrassed eyes, to whom one gave one's orders, was far too good-natured and far too timid to express his side of the question with the necessary emphasis. Some people paid him and others did not, but the majority seemed to prefer the latter alternative, and consequently he was never prosperous.

He sat in the back room, which got all the sunshine there was, on his snow-white working table, with his elder and younger assistants, dignities which were combined in one person when trade was slack. There he worked from early morning till late at night, measur-

ing and sewing, sewing and measuring, until (but that came some time later) he himself was measured for that suit of boards to which we all come at last.

He had a wife, a pale woman, still young, with the most wonderful dark eyes, who went about with a gentle smile and took care that everything was as clean as a new pin, without making any noise. There were two boys still at school, but just getting ready to go into the world. Their ambition could not soar very high, for there was no money to give them further education. But I suppose that there are bypaths in this world along which one can creep, so that one may begin as an artisan and end as an artist. And so the elder became a good painter, who has taken part in the battle of the schools from his position in the Royal Porcelain Factory, and whose name has often come before the public during the last decade.

There were also two little girls, the elder, a sweet little scamp, who used to dash past me, swinging her school books with challenging, mischievous eyes. The younger, the darling of the family, the apple of her mother's eye, and at once the playmate and sunshine of the lonely student, a child clothed as with a magic robe, in the naïve wisdom which one possesses when one is four years old.

Such were the people whose life I henceforth shared. They all slept in the "Berlin room," through which I had to pass to reach my garret, the parents behind a triple-fold screen in a narrow bed, the others on sleeping places made up for them every evening on the floor, and often, when I came home at night, I have crept in on tiptoe, holding my breath, inspired by the anxious ambition of not disturbing anyone's slumber. But once or twice I trod on some one's finger.

I felt from the first moment that I breathed the muggy air of Berlin, that a new life had begun for me in poverty and quiet.

I had finished with the follies of past years and all the strength of my body and soul was concentrated ready for the battle with destiny which lay ahead of me.

My one hope in my condition of helpless loneliness was Hans Hopfen. He was my one thought by day and by night, and never has a hoping, trembling wretch approached the divinity which was to save him with greater awe than I looked forward to Hans Hopfen.

But before I called on him it was necessary that I should regulate my relations with the university. I had been posted on the "black list" as having been struck off "on account of laziness."

But the cleansing of my honor passed off with unexpected ease. Nobody scolded me, nobody asked me questions, and in a minute I was again a citizen of the university, free to make use of lecture room and library, like anyone else who, instead of spending the winter in the backwoods of Lithuania, had clung happily to the breasts of Alma Mater.

It was not until the lectures had begun and I was in a position to give my patron some account of what I was doing, that I ventured forth in a Whitsun spirit of expectancy one sunny afternoon to call on him.

The board on the omnibus read "Rosenthaler Tor—Askanischerplatz," and I had often looked at it with longing eyes, for it led to my goal.

I found monstrous brick constructions in progress, scaffolding which seemed to reach the sky and to which human bodies clung. The Anhalter Station was in process of construction.

And opposite it stood the house in which my future was to be decided.

"The Herr Doctor will see you."

I was shown into a large room which glowed soberly with purple in the brilliant sunshine. I wondered where I had seen the like before and remembered that it was in the house of the director of the Residenz Theater, where Turkish carpets had shone in the same way as divan covers, as cushions, as curtains, and as the soft covering of the floors into which my feet sank.

"So, this is how poets live!" shot through my head.

A short figure with a red beard, like a gnome in a fairy tale, emerged from a smaller room which lay behind and from which a pale-yellow marble woman greeted me graciously as if she were alive, and examined me attentively through his flashing glasses.

"So there you are."

I took his hand in both of mine. All the devotion which I felt for him was expressed in the way I held them.

"Well, and now what am I to do with you?"

If I could only have told him! All I wanted was to see him, to hear him speak, to serve him, to breathe the air he breathed.

"My wife interested herself in you. I think I wrote you to that effect. No? I thought I had done so. Would you like to see her?" and he led me to the smiling marble lady, the original of which I had long since worshiped. "Begas did that . . . secured a great deal of her real self. . . . Yes, how is one to get over a loss like that?"

His features turned to stone, while a well-meant word of comfort froze on my lips.

Then he turned to me again. "It is not easy to help you," he said. "At twenty, one can, as a rule, do

nothing. . . . Or have you perhaps some narrative stuff with you which I could send on to a paper with a word of recommendation? I have several connections."

I had to confess that, with the exception of some fragments—yes, I called them "fragments"!—I had written nothing which came under this category.

"Well, sit down and write something. I will then try to place it for you." Therewith my destiny was settled.

What did I care about my studies? What did I care about my lectures? It was as if a hand had been stretched down to me from the clouds to draw me up to Parnassus. All I had to do was grasp it. Nothing else mattered at all.

Overcome with joy, I walked back to my room through the city. On foot, because my excitement would not have allowed me to sit quietly on the top of an omnibus and, secondly, so as to save ten pfennigs, for it was now obviously necessary to take every groschen into account until the great work which was to be my salvation was finished.

I had little trouble in finding material. It came to me as if it had risen out of nothing. The plot, the characters, the scenery, the sequence of events all were laid upon my table as by an unseen goddess. And all that remained was to seize the fullness of the story and pin it down to paper, before it faded.

Somewhere in an out-of-the-way spot close to the Russian frontier there lived a gentleman, belonging to a noble Polish family, who had been expelled from the great world, the manners and customs of which he carried with a sort of gloomy pessimism with him through the middle-class society to which he had sunk. Whence he drew his income, no one knew, but to let

you into the secret at once, he was a "gentleman smuggler"—what we should call a *Schieber*, or illicit trader, to-day, such as flourishes along all our frontiers.

And in the same out-of-the-way spot there lived a quiet, noble woman who was badly treated by a brutal husband, to whom she had been shamefully sold by greedy relatives. These two lost souls, each utterly lonely, came together and were finally driven by destiny to die together.

It is not difficult to see whence I had drawn my models. The noble Pole was myself and the two women whom I had last met, rolled into one, were the willing sponsors of the heroine.

I meant to get the work done in four weeks, so that I had to hurry.

I calculated that I could easily work eighteen hours a day. Four hours' sleep was enough—Frederick the Great had done with less—one hour each for dinner and supper and every minute beyond that was to be devoted to the writing table.

But there was a flaw in this calculation. My young, healthy body needed sleep and would not fit in with the claims I made upon it. Once I lay down in the evening, I never woke before six or seven, and even the best efforts of the alarm clock which I had borrowed proved useless.

But I had to put a stop to this wicked behavior, and as the bed with its soft mattress was obviously a form of Sybaritism, it was equally obvious that one must learn to do without it.

If, for example, one went to sleep on the bare boards, one's aching and frozen limbs automatically took care that one was awake at dawn.

And so I carried out this prescription: At eleven I stretched myself at full length on the floor with a

pillow under my head and a coat over my shoulders, and at three I was on my feet again with a groan.

At seven, coffee arrived—that is to say, a concoction which was called coffee with a kindly euphemism which is not peculiar to Saxony—and with it a sparsely covered roll, and then, struggle on with God's help until noon.

By that time, or even before, I was seized with a trembling which made it actually difficult to use my pen. But this was a difficulty which could be readily overcome. You put on your boots in a hurry and went off to the Students' Restaurant. This restaurant was the refuge of all those who were not blessed with too much of this world's goods. It was situated at the corner of the Friedrichstrasse and Dorotheenstrasse, or it may have been the Mittelstrasse, I don't remember which—but they gave you for fifty pfennigs a clear soup—all too clear—a slice of meat the width of which made you daily forget how thin it was, and a mountain of potatoes which made up for any deficiency. Add to this bread *ad lib.*, and you had enough to eat, or at least were able to persuade yourself that you had had enough to eat.

Then back again to work, which toward evening became a form of ecstasy. One's cheeks burned, one's pen flew over the paper, and the window niche was filled with swirling pictures which became clearer and clearer, the deeper the red of the sunset became.

And now it was time to stop and go back again to the Students' Restaurant.

Supper only cost forty pfennigs, but was the more copious on that account. Three fried eggs (I don't want to be inaccurate, but the sacred number three sticks in my head), a heap of salad, and as much fried potatoes as one wanted.

And now I must plead guilty to a weakness of character. According to the day's program, I should now have done two hours' more work to make up my full tale of hours. But I don't think I kept to those two hours for one evening during the whole summer.

The blood beat too violently in my temples. There were too many pretty girls running about who obviously needed company, whether on the pavement or sitting on the seats at Friederichshain or in the Tiergarten, to allow me to think of shutting myself up in my hot garret. If I had only been able to afford to buy the little dears a glass of beer I should have been entirely happy. And it often happened. But the inevitable result was that I suffered from tremendous pangs of conscience, for the race between the exhaustion of my resources and the mounting manuscript grew more hopeless from day to day. On the other hand, an hour's tender conversation often provided me with strength and fresh vigor for the coming day. My way home was almost festive and when I went to sleep on the hard boards my head was full of tender pictures.

At three in the morning the game began again.

The four weeks had long since passed and the end of the book was still far off. I had originally intended to write a short story, but it turned out to be a long novel. The worst of it was that there was no one to whom I could show my manuscript with all its imperfections to look through and criticize. It was also necessary to make a fair copy if the book was not to remain a secret forever, and it might be autumn before I was in the position to lay the completed work proudly but modestly in the hands of my patron.

But my money was coming to an end. What was I to do? Starve one's way through, of course. There was no other alternative.

At the beginning of July I gave up for good and all my luxurious meals at the Students' Restaurant. In their stead there appeared four rolls, which in those days were to be obtained for ten pfennigs, and which I divided up with so much providence that one and a half to two were reserved for the evening meal. It was always a critical moment when the portion which was to be set aside for supper had to be stowed away in the top left-hand drawer, and as a matter of fact it had often disappeared by four o'clock.

To this I added another form of nourishment, the effect of which on the stomach was to give it a sensation which had a pleasing similarity to satiety. That was the so-called "broken chocolate." It was sandy and rancid, but it was chocolate, none the less, and one got a whole bag of it for ten pfennigs.

As a matter of fact, it cannot have been quite so bad, for little Lieschen had a pronounced taste for it. About supper time the latch of the door would be lifted and my little darling would appear at the threshold, to—well, let us not tell any conventional lies—to collect her accustomed tribute. And then we really had a merry time. She would bring her doll with her, and, as we were neither of us greedy, we both fed that pampered doll.

But there came an evening when little Lieschen did not appear. She lay on the green sofa, said she did not want anything to eat and only wanted to be left alone. And a day or so later she could not say even that. She just lay with half-closed eyes and dreamed her own dreams.

So it went on for some weeks. The doctor came and prescribed medicines, the mother sat at the child's bed gazing at the child, and her great eyes grew even larger. She was there when I went to bed and she was

still there when I got up at dawn. I might tell her ever so often that I would leave my door open and look after the child, but she never stirred.

And then there came an evening when none of us went to sleep, for little Lieschen, who had always been good and lain quiet, would not stay on the sofa and had foam on her lips.

And when she finally lay quiet she was dead. I ran like one distracted to the nearest doctor, who was very cross with me for disturbing his night's sleep, but who finally came with me to tell us the news that we all knew, and the mother went into convulsions.

On the day of the funeral I deserted my writing table (may God forgive me even this sin) and went with them to the churchyard. We were four men and we held the little coffin on our knees, while August, the elder boy, sat on the box. We had dispensed with the services of a clergyman, first of all because we were Social Democrats and secondly because the affair had already cost a lot of money. And so it was.

Then we drank a white beer with raspberry juice and I secretly consumed my chocolate with it, the chocolate which there was no one to divide with me any longer.

When we came back, the mother was standing at the door. She had not been able to come with us, owing to the fact that she was very weak, and she looked at us eagerly as if we had news of some miracle to bring her. And half an hour later the men were back at their work and I at my writing table.

The mother never recovered from this shock. She smiled no more, and when I passed through the living room I found her sitting before an open drawer, stroking the child's clothes and her doll.

High summer came, and with it the longed-for fair

copy of the finished book. I had taken to going to bed again of nights, for I found that when I got up from the floor I could not get warm, perhaps because the nights were getting cooler or perhaps because the lack of proper nourishment had made me anæmic.

I had met Neumann once in the Friedrichstrasse. He was having a good time as private tutor to a perfumery merchant called Schwartze. He lent me a thaler and, following the dictates of my inborn recklessness, I had gone off at once to the Students' Restaurant. But the unaccustomed food did not agree with me. I had severe pains in the stomach which did not cease until I had got rid of what I had eaten.

The worst of all was that I had not paid my kindly landlord and landlady either my rent or the sums they had expended for me for two months, and they themselves needed money badly. The doctor, medicines, and the funeral had swallowed up a lot of money, and in those days when a suit cost sixty marks it was a favorite sport not to pay your tailor's bill. I suppose to-day, when a capital of six to ten thousand marks is involved, the tailors take more precautions.

When I went into the kitchen at noon, to fetch myself fresh water, I noticed that the fire was not burning, and I soon realized with horror that my landlord's family was living as poorly as I was, so as not to be obliged to give me notice.

On that day, the last piece of property which I possessed went off to the conveniently situated pawnbroker's shop, where my winter overcoat, which is usually the first thing to go in such cases, had already preceded it, long since.

But when I brought the six marks which the pawnbroker had advanced me on it to my landlord, Providence had decreed that he should have just received

payment for a summer suit, so that he generously bade me keep the money for myself, and that helped me on another good stage farther.

I used to go and look at that omnibus at the Rosenthaler Tor with a daily increasing longing, for it seemed to me to bring me a daily greeting from my patron. I had a fixed idea that on the day when I climbed on to its top to lay my work at his feet, I should be freed from all want and trouble in that very hour. Money, praise, and fame, all would swiftly press around me. I often pictured him glancing at the fat bundle which I had written and embracing me as a friend and brother. But many a day was to pass before that happened.

But the more unmercifully I flogged it, the slower the work proceeded. I still kept up my sixteen hours a day fairly well, but my brain became more and more feverish and I had no energy for a long time to wander abroad in the evening. I could just manage to drag myself as far as the Koppenplatz, over the benches of which the autumn wind was beginning to sough.

Finished! Well, now it *was* finished!

I had wept bitter tears over the death of my lovers. Their misfortune affected me much more severely now than it had when I first worked out the plot, for my nerves had suffered greatly in the interval.

"ISOLATED"
A Novel by
HERMANN SUDERMANN

Novel! What a proud word!

Well, there it was, and nothing on earth could now away with the fact. I pulled on my boots and dashed off to the Koppenplatz, since I thought I should best be able to master my excitement in the open air.

It was nine o'clock and night had long since fallen. I threw myself on my usual seat and felt for the back, but it had none, and so I crouched so that my arms supported my back, and as my imagination was in full flood, released from the bondage of the work on which it had been so long engaged and needed fresh employment, it immediately presented me with three subjects at once, which I have kept faithfully with the others all my life. One received its form in my Lithuanian stories under the title "Mix Bumbullis." The other two, "Bread for Bread" and "The End of Boskies," still have to be written down.

At four o'clock the next afternoon the omnibus which ran from the Rosenthaler Tor to the Askanischer-platz did not leave without me.

Squatting on the top, I held the ten coverless notebooks which concealed my sacred treasure in their pages, tightly clutched under my arm, for I feared that they might be lost, owing to some sudden jolt.

In an hour I should stand before him, the omnipotent being who was now raising my unworthy self up with him to the heights.

I noticed that the Anhalter Station had made enormous progress. But so had I.

My heart beat humbly, yet proudly, as I ascended the carpet-covered stairs, flanked with candelabra in opaque shades, such as I had often seen imitated in oil paper on the stage.

It was a long time before some one answered the bell. I heard a step, and a chain was withdrawn. That had not been there the last time.

"The Herr Doctor," said the maid, looking at the stranger with a certain amount of suspicion—"the Herr Doctor is not at home."

"When will he be back?" I asked, supposing that I could wait for him below.

"That is quite uncertain," she replied. "Perhaps in a fortnight."

My knee, which had been hurting me for weeks, gave way. I sank backward against the bronze wall of the landing. What was I to do now? Fortunately, I remembered to ask the doctor's address.

"Heligoland," was the answer, and she added the name of a fisherman, which I immediately forgot.

When I got downstairs I stared about me helplessly, not knowing what to do. I had exactly ten pfennigs left, and the question arose, "Should I remain hungry and drive back, or should I have something to eat and go back on foot?"

I decided on the latter and bought myself a large cracknel over and above my four rolls which I had already consumed, and as I ate it I pondered over the strange ways of famous poets, who, instead of staying in their richly furnished and beautiful apartments, where they had opaque shades even on the staircase, preferred to go and live in some lowly fisher hut.

I, of course, would have done the same myself, but *I* had not yet arrived.

As I was going down the Anhalterstrasse, I read on a signboard over a gloomy door the words "*Deutsche Romanzeitung*" ("*German Novel Journal*"), and somewhat below it, on a smaller sign, "Otto Janke, Publisher."

Now I knew the *Deutsche Romanzeitung* well. It was taken in by the Periodical Circle which provided my home village with intellectual nutriment, and I had spent many an hour in poring over its pages, happily oblivious of the rest of the world.

The arm under which I was carrying my fateful

bundle itched ominously. I seized a quick resolve and marched in.

For the first time in my life I stood in a publisher's office. The man who came forward to meet me from behind the delivery table was young, with sword cuts in his face which had scarcely healed. He was the junior partner of the firm, as I found out later. He measured me with a glance which seemed to say that he had seen my like before.

"Do you accept novels by beginners?" I asked, astonished at my own daring.

"If they are good," he replied with a smile.

"Then I suppose I may as well leave my manuscript with you now?"

"By all means," he said. He noted my name and address and added that I might inquire again in about four weeks.

I told him that I would gladly do so and took my leave, buoyed up with fresh hope. I wished, however, that it had not such a grisly likeness to hope's enemy, despair.

When I ended up at the Auguststrasse after my long walk, I heard an awful row proceeding from the public house next door, accompanied at intervals by a voice like a trumpet.

I asked some one standing in the door what was up.

"It is the regular beer table of the executioners' guild," he replied, "and they are celebrating Hödel's execution to-day."

Of course, yes. . . . Hödel. . . . Nobiling. . . . The matter had passed me by as completely as if some one had dreamed it in a strange land. And another monarch had become more real to me than the Emperor Wilhelm, namely King Herod, for during my leisure hours this summer I had thought out my "Johannes."

When I got back to my niche by the window of my garret I laid a few sheets of note paper on the table and described in rapid sentences what I had done and endured during the summer and how the castle in the air which I had built up on this one day had so miserably dissolved.

I still had two stamps. I put them both on an envelope and sent off my letter to the English island of Heligoland, addressed to Doctor Hopfen. I did this as a means of acquiring a gentle sort of narcotic, and as I came back from the letter box late at night I had a feeling all the time, "How lucky I am!"

I do not remember how I spent the next few days. I think I must have lain on my bed, listening to the church clock telling the hours. Then, at last, the postman brought me one of those dearly loved and eagerly awaited letters on brown hand-made paper, which I knew from the previous winter, and when I opened it in fear and trembling, a fifty-mark note fell out.

I have suffered much want during my varied and sinful life, and many a good deed has come my way to save me, but no kindness that I have ever received, no matter what form it may have taken, has ever come up to this.

The letter ran:

My Dear Young Friend:

What I send you herewith will give you some welcome assistance and you must take full advantage of it. As soon as you receive this go to my house and report yourself to my housekeeper, Fräulein Mathilde Jacobson. I have written to her and she will hand over to you the private tuition of my two boys on my behalf. Yours, H. H.

And so once again I was saved.

CHAPTER XVI

THE POET'S HOUSE

THE two well-educated and well-mannered boys were called Fritz and Hellmut and they showed no objection to coming under the authority of their new tutor, but there was a little lady running loose, called Lilli, who struck a picturesque attitude and informed me that *she*, at least, had nothing to do with me.

The housekeeper, to whom my patron had told me to apply, was an elderly lady with a sharp profile; shortsighted, blinking eyes, and dry, brown, disorderly hair. Although she came to meet me in the first moment with an air of awakened benevolence, I was so shy that it took a long time before I realized that I had made a friend in her.

And my friend she remained long after I left Hopfen's house. She surrounded the most difficult years of my youth with kindliness and she is one of the two women whom I have to thank that I did not fall by the wayside. The other, who years later extracted me from the whirlpool of West Berlin, does not come into the sphere of this book.

My work began, as a rule, at five in the afternoon, except on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when it began at three. Till then I was free. I continued to live in the Auguststrasse, and the omnibus which I had gazed at with so much longing all these months now had me as a regular passenger.

One evening when I had got comfortably settled

down to the exercise books of my pupils, I was called to the front room.

The doctor had returned and wished to speak to me.

He received me in a dark-blue working suit of some cotton fabric, and then he asked me how I liked his house.

I thanked him enthusiastically.

"I can't give you a permanent engagement," he said, "for my means do not allow me to do so, but you are welcome to stay until you find something better."

He then asked as to the fate of the work of which I had written to him.

When he heard that it was lying not far off, at the office of the *Romanzeitung*, he wrinkled his brows as though he were annoyed, and said, "That will lead to nothing; the people don't pay."

But when I ventured to suggest that it did not do to throw any chance away, he agreed with me and added: "Very well. Let us wait to the end of the month and then we shall see."

This was the first occasion on which I dined with him and his family, and for the first time in my life I sat under the rays of a hanging lamp, decorated with copper arabesques, which came to symbolize for me for a long time the acme of refinement and comfort.

There was soup, followed by juicy beef which the master of the house himself cut. And there were all kinds of side dishes, the mere sight of which was enough to make one feel happy. But the great event of the evening was the sweet. This consisted of golden-brown balls filled with a sweet sauce and covered with sugar.

I suddenly felt so dreadfully hungry that I became afraid that I should eat more than was seemly, and

therefore I scarcely ventured to help myself to anything. But Fräulein Mathilde saw to it that I got extra helpings—she had often given me a sandwich in the evenings—and finally I had eaten so much that I rose from the table with burning cheeks and a sense of satiety such as I could not remember ever having had before.

It came to pass that I often, and later regularly, ate at my patron's table. But that first occasion has remained firmly fixed in my memory because it raised me out of a hungry sense of inferiority.

But meanwhile I continued to go on very short rations.

The lectures of the winter term began, and in order to make good the time I had lost during the previous six months, I filled up my time from nine to one every morning with lectures. I don't remember how I got the money for this. Perhaps I arranged to pay for them later, or perhaps I simply attended them as an "unpaying guest."

At the same time I began to look about for more work to fill out the free time which I had between one and three or one and five. I made a study of the advertisements in the big papers and found two jobs which seemed to me to promise adequate remuneration. The first put me in touch with the widow of a saddler, who wanted me to look through her business letters, in the hope that this would enable her to perfect herself in German spelling. She was a bony woman with a violent temper, who used to beat her assistants and could not understand that she suddenly had found some one who was not to be bullied. But when I brought a dictionary with me one day, she discovered that it contained all that she wanted to know, and so she made up her mind

that she did not require my services any longer and discharged me.

The other job was a more serious matter. There was a matron in good society, and herself still pleasantly attractive, who desired that her daughter should appear as a brilliant conversationalist in the drawing-rooms which she visited, and just as she took care that the girl was dressed in the finest clothes, she wanted to secure for her an intellectual equipment to correspond. A well-known dressmaker contributed the first, and I was to provide the second.

On the whole I was allowed a free hand in the choice of materials. The more varied it was, the better she was satisfied: Literature; philosophy; heraldry; sociology—that is to say, excluding anything so vulgar as socialism; æsthetics, excluding, of course, that which was not beautiful, and under this category came most of the Dutch school, still more specially the so-called Realistic school, and even Michelangelo; also the history of music, Egyptology—for they were shortly about to undertake a journey to the land of the Pharaohs; biology; mythology; and all the other ologies you can think of.

The victim on whom all these adornments were to be plastered was a quiet, blonde girl who enjoyed pasting things into a scrap book and who looked at me during the lessons with gentle eyes which besought my assistance.

One must not suppose that my position was a sinecure. The mother was by no means ill educated herself, and was well posted in almost every corner of knowledge, even if she was able to praise the astonishing versatility of the painter-philosopher, Feuerbach, or spoke of Anaxagoras as one of the sophists who were best omitted from the course, owing to their

immorality. She paid great attention to what I said, and also read books to be able to judge the accuracy of my teaching. It was, consequently, necessary to work out my lessons carefully beforehand, but where was I to find the time for that? And what was still more important, where was I to find the time to do my own work?

Here again there was only one possibility, and that was to reduce my sleep to the amount which satisfied Frederick the Great. So I had to be up at two in the morning—at two, mark you! and not three, which is the hour at which lazy people arise.

Nobody had any objection to my going to bed at nine, and if I put some more fuel on the fire when I went to bed I was protected against the horrible cold in the morning.

I now began to develop energy until it became an orgy.

I awoke of my own accord; in fact, there were many evenings when I scarcely dared to go to sleep properly, for fear of not waking up in time. At a quarter to three I was at my writing table; at a quarter to six I had finished my own writing; by a quarter to seven I had finished my preparations for my lesson. Then I hastily glanced through my lecture notebooks, breakfasted, did my dumb-bell exercises—one can imagine what a pleasure this was—and then I dashed off to my lectures.

After I had taken notes with great attention for four hours, I went off to the Sigesmundstrasse to my pupil, with whom I was, of course, head over ears in love. But her mother was on the watch, and we never got beyond the language of the eyes, although I think this was sufficiently plain.

On one occasion, when I was too tired to remember what I had prepared, I endeavored to bluff my way

through by doing my best to repeat the contents of a lecture which I had just heard. But my effort had scarcely lasted five minutes before the mother intervened.

"That appears to me to go too deep," she said. "You must particularly avoid being too thorough, as all the knowledge I wish my daughter to possess must have the character of a pleasant superficiality. You must imagine, when you are talking, that you are making conversation at an elegant party."

Now I ask you, can anyone talk lightly and make conversation for the tea table when he has had nothing to eat since two o'clock in the morning and is frightfully hungry?

But *once* I did get something to eat, and that was also the end of the lessons.

I had just begun to make a flow of conversation with the greatest zeal when I suddenly began to feel a delicious sensation of languor. My ears began to sing and a blue veil covered my eyes; I suddenly had to hold on to the edge of the table.

"What is wrong with you?" I heard the mother's voice say, as if it came from a long distance.

"Nothing," I said and forced a smile. "I have not yet had dinner."

"I will bring you a sandwich," she said, half sympathetically and half crossly, and, forgetting her usual caution, she left the room.

I suppose I must have fallen from my chair meanwhile, for when the mother appeared again with a plate in her hands, I found myself sitting on the carpet and my beloved pupil was bending over me, crying.

Next morning I received a postal order for thirty marks, and with it the information that the lessons

would have to come to an end immediately, as they had decided to go away very shortly.

I have since had business very often in the Siegesmundstrasse, but I never met those sweet eyes again asking me for my help.

About the same time it happened that I became an actor. My career on the stage was short and not altogether brilliant.

One day I read among the advertisements in the paper that the Blue Veil Theater Company was looking for a junior lead.

"Why should not you do it?" I thought. "You are free in the evening, and if you are earning something, then you can go to sleep afterward." I therefore went off to the office of the company in the Schoenhauser Allee, which after a long search turned out to be a public house, and when I asked the man behind the bar for the director, it appeared that he himself held that position also.

He looked at me with obvious satisfaction, and then asked me, not whether I had any talent for acting, but whether I possessed a black frock coat.

The black frock coat which is only to be found to-day at funerals, or perhaps in the office of some Minister, was at that time a necessary portion of the wardrobe of any man who moved in the world. If one were without the garment it meant being shut out from society. Mine, which the skill of the village tailor, Paetzel, had created for me, had already proven itself equal to the most different situations. It is true that it parted above the knees according to the best pattern of the time of its origin. But if one casually thrust one's hand into one's bosom, and also quite casually lifted the front of the coat a little, it possessed that faultless line which distinguishes the

masterpieces of the best Berlin tailors from all other creations.

I was, therefore, able to say, "Yes," proudly.

"Then you must put it on to-day for the rehearsal," he said. "Here is something which you have to learn by heart."

He handed me a book the contents of which I already knew. It was the part of the hero in a one-act play by Wilbrandt, "Youthful Love," which I had already played with great success in amateur theatricals at home.

I will not say anything about the rehearsals. Anyone who has seen "A Midsummer Night's Dream" will be able to imagine them without any difficulty.

And so Saturday evening arrived when the performance was to be given.

I went to my dressing room confident of success. It was not conceit when I told myself that there was no possibility of comparison between myself and my fellow actors.

My first appearance was already a triumph. When I came on the scene in my irresistible frock coat, beautifully made up, and with my hair nicely curled, there was a cry of admiration from the audience, with the exception of a few envious people who demanded silence. I thought I might expect a very great triumph.

But when I began to speak—what was that? What did this secret whispering and giggling mean? For the part was really a serious one. And suddenly a horrid voice roared out, amid laughter which spread from seat to seat, in imitation of my East Prussian accent: "He has just come from Albing" (Elbing) "with the 'farst train.'"

Then everything was clear, all too clear to me. My East Prussian accent, which I have never quite lost,

and of which I am, in fact, a little proud, bore witness at that time all too faithfully to my origin and betrayed my home. It would have been an asset with which I could have been certain of success as a grotesque comedian, but I could not possibly pass even in these circles as a young and elegant man in society.

It is true that I attempted to go on with my part, but we all know our dear citizens of Berlin. Once their sense of humor was aroused there was no end to it. Fresh roars of laughter greeted me with everything I said, and they were just about to play my part with me when the director appeared in person and saved me. Leaving the bar, which was his usual place, he came forward in his shirt sleeves, lifted up a voice like a bull, and shouted down the laughter. He told them that they ought to be ashamed of themselves for laughing at me, for I was a respectable young man, and it was not my fault that I had been born in East Prussia and not on the green banks of the Spree. Besides, they could be extremely thankful that I had not been born in Saxony, or else it would have been *much* worse.

This rebuke calmed down most of the audience. I was able to play my part to an end without being interrupted except occasionally by suppressed laughter. And when the curtain fell, Herr Schoeppke (that was the name which the director had given me on the program) was recalled on to the stage with laughing enthusiasm. I need not assure you that I did not continue this honorable profession, and that I disappeared from the place as quickly as possible, without even making an attempt to collect the ten marks which I was to receive for the performance.

I can write this all down now quietly and with a

smile, and my readers may laugh gently over it. But in those days it cost me much sorrow and that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick.

My novel, too, came to nothing. After I had been fed with hopes again and again by being asked to come another day, my patron advised me to take a strong line. This was successful. When I appeared to keep my appointment for the last time they informed me that they had now thoroughly read my novel and they were willing to print it, but the only honorarium they could give me for it would be twelve free copies, which would be at my disposal immediately the book appeared.

Then I got very angry, demanded the manuscript back at once, and received it without further difficulties.

Thereafter it lay for a long time on the doctor's writing table. He was himself finishing a book of his own, and, therefore, had no time to busy himself with my scribble.

Fräulein Mathilde thereupon appeared as my advocate in the matter, and one day he called me into the front room to receive the sentence which meant to me a question of life or death. It was a sentence of death. The first pages were covered with erasures. There was mistake on mistake which I had to admit as such with contrition, and I was smitten with them as though somebody had knocked me out.

I only once ventured to put in something for myself. "Herr Doctor," I said, "I wrote that with my heart's blood."

Thereupon he stroked his long red beard and, with a thoughtful smile, replied, "You youngsters write with your heart's blood, and we elders write with ink. But our ink burns with a redder flame than your heart's blood."

Well now, there lay my beloved manuscript, which page by page had been piled up with a thousand pains, despised and rejected, in my drawer again. And there it still lies, close alongside of "The Daughter of Happiness."

When I go to Blankensee in spring I always say good day to it, and then I look back sadly and regretfully.

I now reach that happy period in my life when I became the regular guest of the family at their midday meal. Henceforth there was no starvation, for I could always find enough out of my own pocket to get myself a morning meal. But at the same time my early-morning work was a thing of the past. Just as in the past I had lived among consumptives, I now deserted to people with heart disease. Until now I had only known that I had a heart when I had swum too far or was in love. Now I had continual short pains and murmurs in my left breast, and when in the afternoon I climbed the three flights of stairs to the doctor's apartments, I often had to stop on the landing to get my breath. Fräulein Mathilde, who noticed my sufferings, gave me no peace until I had visited her cousin, Professor Jacobson, to whom she kindly gave me an introduction. He received me with smiling kindness, percussed me, listened to my heart, counted, and then asked me with a shake of his head how I was living. And this time I was not laughed to scorn, but received a serious warning not to waste my youthful strength, for a man can do himself as much damage by overwork as he can by idling and dissipation. Thenceforward I lay in bed till eight o'clock, but my sorely troubled conscience reproached me bitterly for many an hour, until my heart calmed down with sleep in the morning.

My life slowly returned to a pleasanter path, along

which my friend Mathilde was good enough to lead me. Being well acquainted with artistic circles, and being saturated with Art to her backbone, she knew exactly where inspiration and encouragement were to be found.

She took me out to the picture dealers' exhibitions, miracle plays, and church concerts, to recitations by long-haired young poets, to concerts by shy young ladies who sang; and more particularly she took me to Bilse, who at that time was the popular musical god. I had no idea at that time that he was also earning immortality as a matrimonial agent; my only interest in him was that he opened my ears to the greater, indeed the highest music, and Beethoven's hammer strokes smote mightily on a heart only too ready to receive them. A great surmise dawned on me that a being might be stirred to the depths of his soul to devote his whole life to Art in every shape and form, in every manifestation—to Art as manifold as life, and yet, like life, a unity.

I saw that everything might become Art—any glimpse caught in a street picture, the massed clouds in the evening sky, an old market woman in the snow, the beating of bells in a church tower, any emotion that affected one's own soul.

And for this surmise I have to thank my friend Mathilde.

Christmastide approached and, to my great joy, I was invited to celebrate it in the poet's house.

Each of my pupils had received the poem which he was to recite in honor of the occasion. They were my own composition, and you can imagine that they contained all the usual references to "snow," "church bells," "herald angels," "shepherds watching their flocks by night," and so on; at least anyone who has

ever written a Christmas poem will understand it. They had been copied out under my supervision on the most beautiful paper, and had been learned perfectly by heart, so that I felt that I could await the great evening without fear.

At last it came. There was a Christmas tree which shone as beautifully as the starry heaven itself, while the dining table was surrounded with plates piled up with presents in such profusion as I had never seen.

Mine, too, was richly loaded. "There is a beautiful surprise for you," my friend Mathilde had told me beforehand with an air of mystery, and when the doctor took me by the hand and led me to my place at the table, what do you suppose I found? A pocketbook with a hundred-mark note in it!

"Money talks," says the proverb, or one might say, "laughs," but in my case it was such joyous laughter as can be at home only in heaven, for, outside of the small sums which I had received from the lessons which I have already described, I had earned nothing during the last quarter and was again deeply in debt to my landlord.

My happiness was so great that I felt almost sad. I sat quietly in a corner and did not know what to be at. I had thanked everybody and wished everybody a happy Christmas, and now I could really have taken my departure. But I still lingered. I wanted to enjoy every minute of this hour which could never come again in my life, for I knew I could not stay permanently in the poet's house.

The children were busy with their toys. Fräulein Mathilde moved from one to the other, explained the toys, played with them as though she were a child herself. "I must try and make them forget their mother," she whispered to me, in passing.

The doctor, however, walked up and down in silence with impatient steps between the brilliantly lighted dining room and his darkened study, where a shaded lamp shone over his disorder of papers. The marble statue glimmered palely like a ghost from the surrounding gloom.

He said not a word to anyone, and nobody dared say a word to him, but at times his gaze rested mournfully on the children, and then he walked back into the dark room.

I could not keep my eyes off him, and when he disappeared behind the door I bent forward to see what he was doing. Then I saw how he stopped in front of the statue, threw his arms round its neck, pressed his forehead against the marble, and sobbed until his whole body trembled and shook.

A great wave of feeling overwhelmed me. I wanted to run after him, take him by the hand, and say—yes, what was I to say?

I was only a poor tutor, kept in his house out of charity, who had lost his position as poet absolutely and completely, for the doctor had never mentioned my work again since that fateful evening. What right had I to go to him and disturb that hour of his sacred grief with my worthless and bungling self?

My seat was not far from the door. I had only to stand up quietly, turn the handle, and go out, and that is what I did.

As I went down the stairs I felt as if I were leaving far, far behind me all the strength and joy, all the support and longing, in my life, as if I were descending into an abyss of poverty and misery from which I should never be able to emerge again.

It was a long walk to the Auguststrasse, but the nearer I got to it, and the more frequently the well-

known features of universal poverty confronted me, the lighter my heart became.

I thought of the saddened Christmas celebration which awaited me in the tailor's workshop—for here, too, a dear one was missed who had been there the year before—and I thought of another Christmas far away in Lithuania which I had been obliged to celebrate the year before as a superfluous guest.

Yes, everywhere I was superfluous, unnecessary, except in that little corner in which I worked. And thankful that it was mine and that I could work out my salvation in it, I walked back to the beloved house which contained it.

CHAPTER XVII

PURPLE AND FINE LINEN

BEFORE the gray years which followed, the Potsdamerstrasse still had a semirural character. The gardens before the houses just left room for a narrow pavement where one rubbed one's shoulders against the iron palings which guarded the dust-covered bushes of the little villas which were being swallowed up by the party walls of the first blocks of flats.

On the right-hand side as you come from the Leipzigerplatz there stood a villa far back from the street, wrapped in dreamy peace and connected with the busy thoroughfare by covered ways, right and left, supported by pillars. I did not know who lived in it, but I had long regarded it with a sense of longing delight whenever I passed it. Its gold-framed mirror-like windows and its flower-decked vases on its artistically decorated balcony made it seem like a magic little castle out of a fairy tale in which good fairies gave wandering knights shelter.

And one day I came to pass much of my time there.

It happened in this wise. My friend Mathilde complained to her cousin, the professor, that things could not go on like this any longer. It was essential that I should have a fixed position with a sufficient salary and the possibility of carrying on my studies to their proper conclusion. He had then looked round the circle of his patients and had come to the conclusion that the sons of a rich banker called Neumann needed

a private tutor who would kindly look after their free hours.

One morning I put on a pair of white gloves and a black tie, as though I were about to appear for my final examination, and called on the banker, who was pleased to approve of me. I received a salary which would have sufficed for a small princedom, free meals except for breakfast, and also the assurance that I might regard myself as a member of the family.

My patron gave me his blessing and also told me that I might come to see him and ask his advice at any time. I could live where I was and all my mornings were my own.

Was there ever a mortal into whose lap so much good fortune was showered at one time?

Henceforth I presided at a table overflowing with simple luxuries and had only to share my power with the governess who looked after the sisters of my three pupils, for the parents ate at a later hour with their guests or by themselves. In the evening our supper followed theirs, but on feast days we ate together.

The housekeeper, too, was a woman who still retained her charm, gentle, dignified, and full of sympathy. She had very beautiful eyes and could blush like a schoolgirl if some expression shocked her.

I seldom saw my employer. He must have been in the sixties and wore gray side whiskers which made his yellow, withered face seem still more withered and yellow. He had a habit of complaining about the deficiencies of the housekeeping and did not bother himself much about the children. I only once found him with them. He was reading a play of Schiller's to them, while they hailed each verse with screams of laughter, and when I came closer, curious to find out what there could be to laugh at in Schiller, I discovered,

to my astonishment, that he was making an extempore parody of the noble pathos of the poet, which, so long as I could remember, had always been sacred to me. At the same time he was said to be a business genius and we spoke of his enormous wealth with bated breath.

I worked with my pupils in an overheated room at the top of the house, heard them say their lessons, corrected them, praised or blamed them, as befitted my office, and did my best not to notice the various forms of naughtiness which youthful exuberance takes in all spoiled boys, for, had they complained of me, I might have lost my job.

The elder two boys were certainly talented—but also lazy, so that the moral equilibrium was maintained. As for the youngest, he still lived in that paradise, which lies beyond good and evil.

I lived for about four weeks daily in the household, as if in a charmed circle of luxurious peace, before I discovered that I was living among Jews. This racial nonsense which had done so little in those days to poison our feelings and our insight as to the distinguishing characteristics had been so little developed, that I should never have thought of the fact, even in my dreams. And when I learned it it did not alter my point of view a particle. No one, who has not himself experienced those days when there was no such thing as antisemitism, can have any idea of that inner spirit of compromise which characterized the relations of the educated members of both circles of society. This stupidity only broke over Germany later on, and the destructive results which have followed on both sides will still afflict the nation even after it has found peace.

I adapted myself quickly and without difficulty to

the life of luxury into which my placated destiny had permitted me to slip. And although I knew it could only be a breathing space which had been granted to me, I drew in the air of this new life through every pore, and so eagerly that all my misery disappeared as though it had never existed.

I was ungrateful and wicked enough to discover, after a short time, that the Auguststrasse was no longer good enough for me. I imagined to myself that the way there and back was too far to travel daily. But as a matter of fact it was the influence of the West End, and it was not until I could call a comfortable and well-furnished room in the Lützowstrasse my own that I felt I was now living up to the duties of my new station in life.

But I remained true to the tailor, and as it was no longer necessary for me to be economical, I got my friend Achtenhagen to make me a number of suits of the finest English cloth, cloth such as his customers, as a rule, never ventured to purchase, and in which my body, which was no longer starved, displayed itself in unimagined splendor.

I also let my beard grow freely, so that it presently spread over my shoulders as broadly as though I belonged to a noble family.

My greatest trouble was my ignorance and clumsiness in society. I noticed this every time that guests were invited to the house and that I was invited to join the company. As a rule I felt myself forsaken and lost and clung with warm gratitude to anyone who was kind enough to talk to me. But it also sometimes happened that I attracted the conversation to myself with a somewhat premature self-confidence, and shed a flood of unripe sarcastic remarks along the table.

I was particularly harsh on a young relative of the family, perhaps because I considered myself his secret rival. He was called Hugo Lubliner, and had recently had a great success with a comedy, which was much talked about, at the Royal Theater.

I naturally did not venture to criticize him, for he was the pride of the family and was idolized by everybody who came into his neighborhood. Consequently, I attacked the playwrights who wrote in the same style, those wretched people who imitated the French and supplied the German stage only with stuff for which there was a popular demand.

I attacked one of them so bitterly that evening—I no longer remember who it was—that finally nobody dared to contradict me, and even Lubliner himself, who had taken his part, could say no more than, with a shrug of the shoulders: "Well, what would you have? We are all cooking with water."

"I always thought one cooked with fire," I retorted, fiercely, to him, and he gave me in return a look which would have annihilated me if looks could kill.

A short time later I was sitting in the parquet of the Royal Theater, watching the first performance of a new comedy by Hugo Lubliner, in which he brought on to the stage in the course of a society scene a young idiot who went from guest to guest with importunate regularity, introducing himself with a deep bow:

"My name is Schumann. My name is Schumann."

I felt myself turn red, for I had a dim memory of that fact that at the first party in Neumann's house I had been peculiarly punctilious in introducing myself to everybody. Much as I disliked doing so, I had to admit that the author was not such a bad observer, after all.

But meanwhile I had rapidly grown out of those

faults. I used my eyes and ears keenly, and every day sharpened my instinct for what was good form and what was vulgar. I no longer had my visiting cards printed on beautiful crystal paper, nor did I any longer commit the *faux pas* of presenting Berlin filigree bracelets to the daughters of the house as birthday presents.

I learned to feel when a smile pitied my ignorance and when it was friendly. I learned how to be quick in my answers and when to listen as the occasion required it; and if anyone made a "bloomer" it afflicted me as deeply as if I had made it myself. My brain began to work fast as soon as I entered the drawing-room. I felt as if I were going on to a field of battle, while an inner voice whispered to me: "Learn it; learn it all. You will need it later."

Well, and so it is. I have been learning all my life long, and am still learning, especially from every woman with whom I come into conversation—intimate conversation, be it understood.

But there were more important things for me to learn than mere society manners, especially now that poverty with all its attendant furies no longer oppressed me, against which I had so long been fighting.

I went to my lectures in the morning, but I was no longer prevented from allowing the wisdom of the learned professors to percolate through me by an empty stomach, by tremblings of the limbs, or by fears that I should have no dinner. And that which I had long regarded as a painful handicap and as a sign that my mental powers were giving way, my inability to grasp the inner meaning of the teaching, the sense that all this listening to lectures and the work which I did were in vain—all this gave way,

was blown away, one might say, by a blessed sense of prosperity and of making ground again.

During this period I worshiped Paulsen as a teacher and regarded his teaching, his smiling skepticism, as something which was part of my very nature. Steinthal aroused my enthusiasm, as did Scherer to the same degree. But in regard to the latter, I never lost a certain sense of inferiority. It was as if I was an unbidden guest at his feast of knowledge, who had forced his way into his company.

I wrote a number of highfaluting letters to my friend Mathilde, who had meanwhile left Berlin and found a home with some near relatives on an estate somewhere in the Mark Brandenburg, telling her of the abundance of new revelations which were lifting me to the heavens, and received in reply an occasional cooler, gently expressed, which brought me down to earth again quite softly, on some grassy meadow.

About this time I came to a dead finish with one of the subjects on which my degree, and therewith my bread, depended, and it was my old enemy, grammar.

It happened in the middle of one of the lectures which the famous exponent of Romanist grammar, Professor Tobler, gave three times a week, that the blow fell. He was lecturing on the history of the mute *e*, when I, wearied to death of the eternal references in which he indulged, suddenly tore my notebook in half, picked up my hat, and, undisturbed by the indignant looks of my neighbors, hastened to the door.

I knew quite well that this desperate step put me forever beyond the pale of respectable society and condemned me to a dark and dubious future, perhaps even to eternal damnation, but I also knew that I should never again be at home in the dreary wastes of

grammar. The time had passed during which my brain had shown itself ready to absorb rules of syntax and inflections. I shrugged my shoulders and regarded them with disdain, caring nothing whether they might be the basis on which any scientific knowledge of the subject might depend.

I did not care what the result might be. The one important point was to get away, to get away at any price. Life, perception, power, everything which spoke to me daily with the tongues of angels, full of riddles though it might be, though it flattered or threatened, in a thousand new forms and pictures—that was *my* world.

There was a garden behind the Neumanns' villa which cut deep into the area between the streets. I had never imagined that it was possible that such an island of flowers as this could keep itself concealed from mortal gaze in the stony sea of the great city. And in it there grew trees and shrubs which shrouded the paths with their heavy blossoms, and under them schoolgirls and youths could tell many a tale of first love.

I played the part of the heavy father and saw and heard nothing, no matter what might be forced on my attention. Between sunset and the rising of the moon I sat in this earthly paradise as if bewitched and knew nothing else except my own happiness.

There were two nieces who often came to visit us—not actual relatives, for one was the niece of the master of the house and the other of his wife. Each had her own type of beauty, but each was so beautiful that I think I have never in all my life seen anything so lovely.

I loved both of them, even though they were both wrapped in the veil of brides-to-be, for they were just

about to be engaged to two rich men. And when they passed me, like flowers from the Far East, I always felt a wave of emotion sweep over me, as though some sweet, yet poisonous, scent from the garden had robbed me of my senses.

One, whom I met at intervals later on in society, died in her youth and beauty, and one of our best-known novelists has made her the heroine of a novel which is widely read. The other is, I believe, now married to an Italian noble. Thus their destinies were widely different, but not so the poems which I wrote to them, for *they* were all equally bad.

Summer followed spring, and the day approached when we were to go away for the holidays to a seaside resort on the Baltic, called Heiligendamm, a place which had long been exciting my imagination.

I had never been to a regular seaside resort, for the places on the East Prussian coast, owing to their lack of natural beauty, did not count. And what would happen when I got to such a resort filled me beforehand with a trembling anticipation of wild romance.

I had a vague idea that at such seaside resort the great world, the world of novels and of society plays, the world which one otherwise only saw rolling past in its carriages, was welded here into one noble community within the circle of which all the barriers of society were dropped, and a noble custom permitted everyone to mix on even terms. It was even said that the Grand Duke presided at the table at which all the visitors met at midday in free and easy intercourse. I looked forward to experiences which opened up vistas into many a promised land, glimpses which I should be able to cherish half my life.

After a short railway journey the place which lay

before me appeared to be the perfectly fitting theater for the dramatic events which I expected to happen.

There was a circle of white-painted villas sleeping around the blue waterside with a temple in their midst which appeared to me made of marble, surrounded by palaces, with a grass plot with flower beds in front of it. And there was a long pier jutting far out into the sea, along which one could wander like the happy gods themselves.

We lived in one of the villas which surrounded the beach, the villa "Perle." We had all the rooms, and the room at the top of the tower, from the window of which the wide-stretched sea lay spread out before one like a carpet of mother of pearls, was mine. Yes, I had it all to myself. There, high above all the busy traffic of the world, I could live to myself like some old pirate king in his island castle. I had surely not deserved to be born between wood and heath if in anticipation of this happy solitude my desire for experiences of the outer world had not vanished into smoke.

And these experiences did not come to meet me. Although we obeyed the summons of the bell twice a day and went off to the *table d'hôte* in the Greek temple, and although the visitors sat close to one another in two long rows, the little group which we formed remained a close circle. And none of the beautiful blonde women and girls who managed to put their neighbors at a wide distance with their stiff smiles ever showed the faintest desire to become intimate with us.

When the Grand Duke arrives, I thought, then, of course, the barrier will be dropped.

I had pictured the Grand Duke to myself as a kind of fatherly president of the resort, who had nothing

which he was more anxious to do than to induce the various groups of people to mix with one another and to be a kindly adviser to anybody who did not feel quite at home in his little dukedom.

But the place at the head of the table at which His Highness sat remained obstinately empty. And when it was filled one day, to the tremendous astonishment of all the visitors, it was occupied by a rich builder from Rostock, who had come over for Sunday to Heiligendamm with other citizens of that noble city. And so there was nothing left for us but to discover the names and ranks of the other people at the table through waiters and shopgirls. Our ears buzzed with noble names, some of which had played a big part in the country's history. The only pity was that there was no bridge over which one could get to know the people who bore them. The social equality of which I have spoken was probably even in those days not very complete. And in this case it was certainly diminished by the almost anxious reserve and pride of these aristocratic people.

But all this mattered nothing to me. As my charges were best pleased when I left them alone, I was able to live my life exactly as I and the sea desired.

The people with boats to hire soon realized that I could row even against wind and wave, and when the sea was rough and others were not permitted to go out at all, they would always let me have a boat. How I got out through the surf thereafter was my affair.

The deadly danger with which I was continually playing—a little out of vanity, as I must confess—one day, however, took me by the throat when I was least expecting it.

There was no wind and the sea was perfectly calm when I pushed off from the pier, but one of the boat-

men leaned over the balustrade and shouted after me that I should look out, because there was a storm raging over there off Denmark. I laughed at him, because Denmark was a long way off.

I had never got so much pleasure out of rowing, and I had never felt that I had such Herculean strength. The boat flew along as if it had invisible sails filled with the storm which was raging over there off Denmark. And so all went well for about half an hour. The land disappeared behind me. The white villas on the shore had long since become tiny shimmering dots. I then noticed, however, that a swell had taken the place of the perfect calm and this was followed by short, choppy waves which began to break against the bow. And when I turned to look at the open sea I observed with a certain amount of uneasiness that the horizon at no great distance seemed to be broken by a sea which was running fairly high.

I immediately turned the boat round toward the land and began to row hard. I was so eagerly anxious to get out of these uncanny waters again that I did not notice that one of my detachable cuffs had slipped over my hand and fallen into the water alongside of the boat. It is a terrible confession to make that I still retained this remnant of the poverty which I had thrown off, but I have to confess that I, the half-baked man of the world who had been taken by innocent Sunday excursionists for a young Mecklenburg noble, was still wearing these abominations.

I rowed hard for a long time, as it seemed to me, with all my strength, and was beginning to flatter myself that I had got a great deal closer to the land, when, looking over the side for a moment, I noticed that the cuff, with its silver link in it, was still tossing quietly alongside. My heart seemed to come into my mouth.

During all that time I had not got an inch nearer to the land. On the contrary, I was, if possible, being carried farther away from it by the current, and now I began to fight for my life. What I had hitherto thought was work was child's play compared with the amount of energy which I should have to expend if I was not to perish miserably in this waste of waters. I braced my feet against the seat and pulled as fast as I could, and yet with as long a stroke as possible. My chest felt as though it would burst, and my eyes grew dim as I forced my way over one wave after the other. In this fashion I fought my way foot by foot over the distance—immeasurable it seemed—which lay between me and safety.

Half blind with the sweat which ran into my eyes, with bleeding hands and a heart which seemed every moment as if it was about to give out, fighting down one fit of weariness after another, I, at last, saw the landing stage, the woods, and the villas coming nearer and nearer, after what seemed hours of torture.

The current diminished in strength and the boat seemed to obey my weakening limbs more willingly, and at last I reached the piles which meant my rescue. The pier was crowded with people who had been looking at me with their field glasses. The boatmen had long since given me up for lost, and received me with noisy reproaches for my folly. Now, however, I said to myself, "Keep a stiff upper lip."

"What is wrong?" I shouted back to them. "That was a splendid fight, I should like to have it over again to-morrow."

But then I fell unconscious to the ground.

Anyone who is ever thoroughly at home in that blessed corner of the world, knows the magic wood

which runs up behind the villa of the Grand Duke through the hillock covered with trees which run along the seashore. The sea wind, which once upon a time twisted the branches into the most extraordinary shapes so that they seemed to writhe like snakes, has since blown them down, and anyone who walks through the wood to-day has no idea what extraordinary shapes trunk and branch had taken, silvery with moss.

There I sat pretending to read, but my gaze was bent over roof and beach and sea into the red glow of the evening. And in my dreams I waited for the adventures which the good fairy gives to those whom she favors. This was happiness enough in itself, even if nothing else happened, except that I went home alone. But in the end the good fairy smiled on me. She came in the form of an eager-eyed, slender young woman who looked about her helplessly, and then tripped up to me confidentially on her high-heeled shoes, asking me in broken German the way to the Kurhaus.

I sprang up and offered to guide her, and then the good fairy became even more kind and addressed me with a bewitching smile:

"Ah, c'est vous, Monsieur le Comte! Tant mieux pour moi, que je vous trouve. Je sais donc, que je suis toute sûr."

I mustered what French I could and stammered something about there being some mistake, and that she was confusing me with somebody else. But my good fairy was not to be denied.

"N'essayez pas me tromper," she said, smiling. "On vous m'à montre sur le debarcadère."

My resistance collapsed. If my destiny willed it so, what could I do?

We rapidly became acquainted and walked along quietly side by side, and thus I learned that my good fairy had chanced to come here, owing to a number of curious circumstances; that she was waiting here for somebody whom she wished to meet *en secret* and that meantime she had become tired of waiting. The person whom she was going to meet belonged to the same circle of society as I did, but for that very reason had to be very careful about being seen with her in public. She was living in a villa all by herself, had her meals fetched for her by her servant, and avoided appearing in public places during the day.

"Car, vous savez, on se connait, on s'est vu a Bade-Bade, à Ostende, à Biarritz, à—qu'est ce que je sais. Et comme je suis ici sous un nom supposè, ça me serait dont très—pénible, n'est ce pas?"

After I had given my word of honor that anything which passed between us should remain an eternal secret, I learned, it is true, not the real name of my good fairy, but I was given to understand that she was closely connected with the Montmorencys and Talleyrand Périgords.

And so far as I was concerned, *nous sommes de la même société, ça suffit.*

Do you suppose that I could now say: "You are mistaken, Madame la Comtesse. I am merely a poor tutor in the suite of a Berlin banker, and separated by the wide world from the society to which you belong?"

Of course, I ought to have done that, but my character was not strong enough to enable me to do so. I liked the way she said, "*Cher Comte.*" It seemed to establish a certain alliance which overstepped a thousand barriers. It seemed so natural and so thoroughly appropriate to the experience of the moment that the existence in which I hitherto had felt

myself fairly well at home suddenly became entirely impossible.

I had to say farewell to her before we reached the first houses of the village, because it was absolutely forbidden for me to know in which of the villas she lived, but by way of comfort I was to be permitted to wait for her at the same time and at the same place.

And I did not wait in vain; in fact, I did not have to wait at all, for she was already there. When she made room for me on the seat with a smile and graciously gave me her hand to kiss, she seemed to me to be a more gracious destiny than any which life had yet brought me. It seemed to be the crowning point of my existence, and the idea that I could ever escape from her magic circle seemed to me absolutely incomprehensible.

We sat for a long time that evening with each other, deeply engaged in exchanging our views on life, and the more deeply I fell in love with her, the more fluent became my French.

We spoke of the obligations which the members of high society had toward one another, owing to their birth, of the sublime forms in which every passion was refined in such natures, and how all rough natural feelings in their nuances and different forms of emotion were transformed into a divine tenderness.

"Si, par exemple, cher Comte, vous vous avisiez de me montrer quelques tendresse vulgaire, ça me desillusionnerait beaucoup—beaucoup. Ah, si, si!"

I had, it is true, never dared even in my dreams to show her a vulgar form of tenderness or even a polite *approchement.* But as she herself mentioned the subject, I felt it necessary to support the sacred character of the laws of nature and everything else

which is the logical conclusion thereof, no matter what the laws of high society may say. And I must have convinced her, for when in the fire of my eloquence I moved unconsciously closer to her, she did not move away from me, but allowed her warm shoulder to rest against mine with delightful simplicity.

I suppose it never becomes actually dark during clear July nights on the Baltic, and as occasionally a belated couple passed our seat, we considered it advisable, in order to preserve the secret of her presence here, to seek more secluded spots.

"Car n'est ce pas possible, que quelqu'un de la société me reconnaisse?"

You friends of Heiligendamm, do you know the Teufelssee, do you know that pond covered with duckweed which lies embedded among tall beeches like the basin containing holy water under the arches of a cathedral?

It was there, where toward midnight none of the passing couples could disturb us with their vulgar love-making, that we sat.

But soon, however, there came the awakening. I had tumbled into the adventure as a blind man falls into a ditch. But I finally had to realize that the whole of my happiness was based upon a vulgar piece of duplicity. It is true that the "*Cher Comte*" form of address no longer appeared in our conversation; it had been succeeded by gentler terms such as "*mon chéri*" and "*mon petit*," but none the less the understanding remained that we both belonged to the same rank of society.

There was a very thin shade of difference between myself and a swell mobsman, and so far as love was concerned I was literally that.

I felt myself torn with pangs of conscience. I could

not sleep, I could not eat, and when I met her at a fresh rendezvous I was sad and preoccupied.

"Tu m'aimes trop, chéri," she said, in her anxiety to explain my change of feeling. "On ne fait pas le surnois. Ce n'est pas chic."

I thought with horror that if this went on I should subsequently bore her, and I was considering whether I ought not to fling myself at her feet and confess everything, when a misfortune happened which frustrated my idea forever.

One evening, as we were returning from the Teufelssee, she discovered, to our mutual consternation, that one of the diamond earrings which she wore was missing.

We turned back at once. We lighted all the matches which I had in my pocket, and we felt and searched the grass in a wide circle round the seat on which we had sat, but the missing diamond was nowhere visible.

I had an uneasy feeling that in view of her tearful misery—"C'est un cadeau de mon ami, vous savez. Qu'est ce que je lui dirai? Ah! ah! ah!"—that it was my duty, a duty which I could not avoid, to offer to replace the missing diamond and to go over to Rostock at once and order it at a jeweler's. But the question remained. How was I to find the money? And so I walked alongside of her with bent head and little to say, confining myself to the assurance that I would spend the whole of to-morrow morning in hunting over the place where we had sat and every inch of the way we had taken, so as to find the missing jewel. And that I actually did.

Had I been rather more experienced in the natural laws which govern this kind of "countess," I should have saved myself much trouble, for I should have

had as much interest in her as an astronomer has in a star which is about to vanish in accordance with his calculations. Instead of which I found a new idea to worry myself with. And that was this:

"Supposing that she now discovers that I have been sailing under false colors and have thus managed to creep into her favor, will she not immediately think that I have something to do with the disappearance of that earring?"

And the horrible implications which might be placed on my behavior affected me so much that I not only blamed myself as a swell mobsman, but I began to think of myself as an actual thief. No! As a matter of fact, I began to think that I had really stolen that missing diamond earring. I even went so far as to search through all my belongings in the fond hope that by some accident it might be found there.

I can tell you that my sufferings were indescribable, and when I met her again in the late gloaming I could scarcely utter a word. But she, too, was strangely silent, rather cool, and not in the least inclined for professions of affection. We parted with a hasty hand-shake, and she did not appear the next evening nor any other.

She had told me the most extraordinary things, such as that an aristocratic company met on certain evenings in the garden veranda of the Kurhaus, under the presidency of the Grand Duke ——. "But, of course no one must know of this, for if anyone did he would cease to look for the Grand Duke elsewhere." I also heard of a secret gambling club which owed its existence to the tolerance of this ruler, although, according to German law, it was absolutely forbidden. I also heard of a small scandal which had recently occurred there, but from a different source.

It appeared that a Frenchman who was temporarily employed at German seaside resorts as a croupier, and who, together with his young wife, had been her neighbor at the Waldhaus, had been followed up by the police as a crook and had been dismissed by the club. He had disappeared, together with his wife, who, it seems, cannot have amounted to much, for she had been running around every evening with a private tutor, while her husband was otherwise engaged.

And so my first experience of ladies of the great world came to an end.

Thenceforth, my free hours belonged to the sea and to nothing else, and that did me so much good that I soon began to feel that I was simply bursting with energy.

When I returned with my charges to Berlin at the beginning of the school term, and saw how well I looked, I did not know what to do with all the energy that I had stored up. I walked about in triumphant physical fitness, as brown as a berry, with the arms of a professional wrestler, and with my beard even longer than ever.

I had also become very particular. I anointed myself with perfume and purchased a very thin Chinese tea set with two cups—for one never knew what might happen. I had flowers on my breakfast table every morning. I also thought it necessary to smoke only the best Havanas, and when I was enveloped in the clouds of smoke which arose from them after breakfast I felt that I was really a man of the world, and could imagine myself as spending the rest of the day in my club or at my racing stable or in dallying in some lady's drawing-room or boudoir. I also put on a certain amount of languishing grace

which did not, it is true, entirely harmonize with my boxer's muscles, but which seems to be part of my complicated character.

At the same time I attained an attitude of intellectual superiority which was in glaring contrast with the actual condition of my studies, although it was perhaps justified to some extent—taking my youth into consideration—by a brain which worked quickly and which had absorbed a great deal.

I have never been idle. I read a great deal and rummaged about in every field of knowledge, and every morning brought fresh material to a healthy and very active brain.

Had I been a young gentleman, the heir to millions, and at home in good society from birth, there would have been little to choose between the condition which I aimed at and the facts. But the luxury with which I surrounded myself really existed in my imagination. The flowers on my table only cost fifty pfennigs, the real Havanas twenty-five, and the furnished room in which I dreamed my dreams of being a man of the world cost me eighteen marks per month, and I had hired it until the autumn and paid for it in advance.

I cannot really say that I envied the real men of the world whom I pretended to imitate, the lives they led. My own life seemed to me a far better one, for it did not exhaust my strength, and there were no limits to the free range of my thoughts.

At the same time, I should very much like to have seen with my own eyes what this life was actually like. The very fact that I was going to be a poet in the future required that I should know it. When I took up my pen to describe what my Muse gave me, I realized at once that I was fumbling in the dark. I was continually writing sketches the scenes of which

were laid on the banks of the Seine, for the only matter drawn from observation which I possessed came from the French books which I had read.

But this gap in my knowledge was soon filled up.

One of the young men whom I had met at a party at the house of my employer during the spring stopped me in the street one day, asked me how I was, and whether it would amuse me to come to a little bachelor's party which he proposed to give shortly in his house. It would, he said, give me an opportunity of getting to know some of the most beautiful cocottes whom Berlin had to show.

His offer filled me with so much surprise and excitement that I quite forgot to preserve the air of indifference which a man of the world ought to show, while I accepted his invitation.

Thenceforth I could think of nothing but this party, which filled me with pleasurable excitement, but I was also rather scared, and had I been suddenly summoned to court, I could not have looked forward to what lay before me with greater trepidation. How should I hold my own with those who are living on the higher levels of society? Should I have sufficient knowledge of the world? And, above all, would not the fact that I was simply a poor student who had not yet taken his degree be a stumbling block to me? So far, I had only seen these exotic flowers whose scent caused men to die, these sphinxes who, while they kissed the men of their choice, drove their claws into their shrinking flesh, in the foremost seats of the theater, where they sat covered in lace, adorned with jewels, while their pale faces with the gleaming eyes were shaded with ostrich feathers.

I had also many another picture of the type drawn from ancient history. They would be full of wit and

would make the most tremendous demands on anyone who entered into conversation with them, like the Hetairai of old, with whom only a Pericles or an Alcibiades could possibly converse.

Carried away by Dionysius, they would be lifted far above the level of this ordinary world which kept poor people like ourselves absolutely in its thrall. And how could we follow them into those blessed heights if we had no wings to raise us over the dead level of every-day existence?

The evening of the party arrived.

My friend, Otto Neumann, had just come round to take me out for the evening, and looked very much surprised when I told him casually and condescendingly that he must excuse me, as I was going out to a cocotte supper. After all, if one belongs to the great world, one has to do as the great world does.

When I entered my host's house, which was as full of mediæval and Oriental weapons as if he had just come back with trophies from a crusade—although as a matter of fact, he had never left his father's bank—I found that a party of ladies and gentlemen had already arrived, some of whom were apparently being bored in silence, while others formed whispering groups which seemed to have no connection with the other people. My host introduced me as Doctor Sudermann, a title which several others also possessed, but I hope with greater right than I had. The gentlemen, who were all older than I was—some of them were already rather bald and had gray hair about their temples—shook me by the hand, some genially, and others rather stiffly. The ladies, who to my inexperienced eyes did not seem to be much different from other ladies, looked me over very sharply, and then returned to their conversation without interest.

There appeared to be something about me which made an unfavorable impression. It was not until later that I discovered that it was the white tie which I was wearing with my evening dress which branded me at once as an outsider. In those days a smoking jacket had not yet become fashionable, and the demimonde looked down on everybody with the necessary disdain who did not show that he was sufficiently acquainted with the usages of good society to wear a black tie with his evening dress.

The result was that I found but little favor even with the ladies on either side of me at dinner, and it was not until I happened to mention that I had recently returned from Heiligendamm and shown some intimate knowledge of the small incident which had happened at the gambling club there, that I succeeded in gaining any attention, which, however, speedily disappeared when it was found out that I only knew the people in question by name.

But in general the other gentlemen at the table were not much better off, for some of them were simply treated like dirt by the ladies beside them, who talked across them and only paid attention to them when their glasses needed replenishing.

The only topic of conversation which could hold its ground was that of the Guards officers. The names of noble families were tossed about as though one were reciting the whole *Almanach de Gotha*, and as most of the men present were members of the Jewish world of finance and had but slender connection with those other circles, they were principally confined to listening to these names unless they could boast that they had served their year of military service under one or the other of the officers mentioned.

The ladies also copied the language and expressions

of the Guards as carefully as possible, and as they brought up in review little Prince Putzi, and the tall Baron Schnups, and the extraordinary Count Misepeter with a snarl, one might really have supposed that these gentlemen, or at least their caricatures, were present before us.

As things became livelier, it appeared that the ladies were not afraid of indulging in more confidential statements. They told us names of the people in the high life of Berlin who were famous for their *affaires*, and even mentioned the sums which one was giving the other.

So-and-so is giving So-and-so so much, and So-and-so is giving So-and-so rather more, was the theme, with endless variation. Sometimes the amounts mentioned sounded absolutely fantastic, and then they were laughed at and derided. But very often they were very modest, and I must say this much about the ladies, that they did not show any contempt or even surprise when this was the case. I remember, for instance, a certain sum of four hundred marks which a well-known young prince was supposed to be paying as the monthly emolument to a lady in the theater who was famous for her beauty. Later on, when I met the lady at a time when we had both made good on the stage, I could not help seeing the number four hundred as it were imprinted in a nimbus which surrounded her famous head.

Things got more and more lively, and by degrees one approached those minor nuances with which the priestesses of Cythera gloss over their awkward means of earning their livelihood.

"Well, you know, she has somebody else besides, and so has So-and-so; and as for her, well, she has got a lot of friends, and if you only knew, etc., etc."

The whispering and giggling and *double entendre* spread round the table, so that one was finally so oppressed by the weight of secrets which one was not supposed to understand, but which one learned all the same, that one finally seemed to oneself some kind of initiated criminal who was secretly intrusted with a share in the scheme of destiny.

All this appeared so important and so much as if it formed a part of the only life which seemed worth living, that I had considerable trouble in making it clear to myself how little it had to do with me and my real life, and when dinner came to an end I had become so much at home in this world that I had to ask myself with great misgivings, "Where are you?" before I came to my senses again. And I shuddered to think that one might be condemned to sacrifice one's youth helplessly, in spite of its happiness and promise, to a world of this kind.

When the coffee arrived, the various couples who seemed to belong to each other as if they were married, began to sort themselves out, and those ladies who beforehand had been most insistent on their connections with the Guards, suddenly showed that, even if it were but temporarily, they were interested in forming a connection with the world of finance, and had found it.

There were also arrangements which lasted only for the day, and as there had been as many men as women invited, it presently happened that there was somebody who took an interest in me.

This was a pale, tall, slender blonde, dressed in black, with faded lips and narrow, wearied eyes which opened but seldom, and then as it were unwillingly. She had sat opposite me at table and had been the most silent person there. But when she had opened

her mouth she had shown so much hauteur that she had appeared to me to be the most disagreeable person in the whole company.

Well, she had been allotted to me, and I, of course, had to be polite. I asked her about her connections with the great world, and promptly received the whole of the *Almanach de Gotha* all over again. Finally, as the company broke up (some of the newly formed couples began to think that it was urgent to seek shelter somewhere) she requested me to find her a cab, and I could see no reason for refusing her. It then turned out that we went pretty much the same way home, and so it was quite natural that we drove off together.

I paid off the cab in front of her house, as I intended to go the rest of the way on foot.

But when I accompanied her to the door of her house, I noticed that she went a little way aside and passed her left hand over the closed shutters of the shop which was close to the door, either playfully or caressingly. At the same time she uttered a sound which was like the whimpering of a small dog.

I wanted to make a speedy departure, but she said to me, "Please come upstairs with me for a little while."

I thanked her, but also refused quite decidedly, for I had heard something of the prices which these ladies demand, and had no intention of spending the savings which I had made during these last six months and which represented all that I had to meet my dubious future, in one evening's amusement.

Then I noticed that a sudden anxiety showed itself under the mask of her features, and with a smile that was intended to be pleading, but which appeared to me very much forced, she said to me, miserably:

"Oh, please come up, if it is only for a quarter of an hour. I have had a horrible experience, and since then I am afraid to go up to my rooms alone."

I therefore walked up with her the three flights which led to her rooms, which were separated from the rest of the house by a double door. The window curtains consisted of Turkish prayer cloths, the curtains over the door were of plush, and the carpets, which pretended to be Smyrna carpets, expressed her wish to display the luxury which prevailed at that time.

The door of her bedroom stood half open, and I had a faint impression of lace and silver shining through a dull blue light.

I was very much embarrassed, for I did not know how I was going to get out of the house. The lady laid down her hat and cloak in silence, offered me a cigarette, which I refused, threw herself back in a rocking chair, smoked, sang, threw the cigarette away again, and in the middle of her singing suddenly began to sob. When I tried to comfort her and asked her to tell me what was troubling her, she told me the following story:

Six months before a young business man had opened a grocer's shop in the house, and, as he was but a beginner and did not know very much about his business, she had thought it only fair to buy her cold meat and other wares from him, although the choice which he had to offer was pretty small. Also, when she expected gentlemen to visit her in the evening, she had intrusted him with the choice of the wines, and these he had selected for her readily and with a certain amount of taste.

This had ripened into a friendly acquaintance and they had spent many a half hour together, chatting pleasantly.

Then one day the post had brought her a letter from him, although he lived in the same house. She had thought at first it was a bill, although she was not aware that she owed him anything, and when she had opened it it was not a bill, but a declaration of love.

At first she had laughed, but when she had thought over how quietly but industriously the young man went about his business, how kind and friendly he was, and how content he was to sleep and live in a dark hole behind the shop, the offer became no laughing matter. And then, on the other hand, she had thought that it would be very disagreeable for her to have somebody in the house who was continually watching who visited her and whom she could not respect unless he were really jealous.

She had, therefore, made up her mind to go and talk to him, and that she had actually done. She had told him not to be a fool, for he must know that her hands were tied—she had, as a matter of fact, a definite liaison which occupied her at any rate from four to seven, and nothing real could eventuate between them. When she had said good-by she had given him her hand as a friend, and he had let her go without saying a word.

A week later she had again bought some cold meat at the shop. It seemed as if nothing had happened, and one evening when she was bored and felt inclined to ask him to come up to visit her, she had received another letter, again through the post, which amounted to the following: He wondered what she thought of him. Did she not believe that his intentions were honorable? He knew, of course, that he was poor and badly educated and had no real right to write to her. But if she would only say "yes," then he would devote his whole life to make her happy.

From that moment a great change had come over her being. She had felt that she loved him with all her heart and that she could have no happier future than to become a simple, hard-working shopkeeper's wife, sharing his happiness and sorrows with him. But at the same time she was terribly frightened that he might become disgusted with the life she had thitherto led, and that his resolution might weaken as soon as there were no more obstacles to overcome. Her experience of life had also told her that the more readily one yielded to a lover, the less one was appreciated. She had, therefore, decided to let him wait for a bit and not to listen to him until she could be sure that he was faithful to her in spite of her present relations.

She had, therefore, given him no answer, and instead of making her purchases herself, she had sent her servant down to him when she wanted anything. She also had not hesitated to stand with her friends in full view of the shop, although she could well imagine how painful this must be to him.

At the same time, she had thought of nobody else but him, and her fancy had painted a thousand pictures of the splendid life she would have if she were only standing at his side in the shop, working and caring for him. She had meant to sell her jewels so as to bring fresh capital into the business; she had meant to increase the business. Oh, was there anything she had not wanted to do?

On a Friday morning—it was, of course, a Friday—she had received a bunch of flowers, and although there had been no note with the flowers, she had known immediately that they were from him. Her first thought had been to run downstairs and throw herself at him, but then her anxiety had awakened

again, and she had felt that she ought to wait a little longer. She had kissed each of the flowers a great many times, but as she went out of the door she did not turn round to look at him.

On the Saturday, she had thought to herself, "Well, that settles it." But her friend had invited her to go out that evening, and she then intended to break off all relations with him, so that she could appear free and disengaged before the man of her choice.

Consequently, she had postponed it to Sunday, when, as she knew, he closed his shop at noon, and she had intended to send her servant down with a note in which there was nothing else but, "Please come and have dinner with me to-day." The rest would follow as a matter of course.

About seven o'clock in the evening her friend had called for her and they had gone to the theater, and thereafter to a wine restaurant. Here she had threshed the matter out, at the end of which her friend had promised her a large sum, which she had thankfully accepted because she had thought that it would all come in useful for the business.

But when she had reached her flat she had found a letter stuck into the door. For once he had not troubled the post. She had opened the envelope joyously. The letter ran:

My Dear Young Lady:

By the time you receive this letter I shall be dead. I see quite plainly that I am too mean to have raised my eyes to you, and, therefore, I am going to die. My last thoughts will be of you. May you live happily and may you forgive me. I love you eternally.

Yours, A. K.

She told me this story quite simply, and to prove that it was true she brought me his parting letter out

of a drawer and showed it to me. I did not need to ask whether he had carried out his intention.

"Since that day," she said, piteously, rising from her rocking chair, "I cannot go to sleep unless I have somebody up here with me, and that is the only reason why I asked you to come with me."

Of course, as I was twenty-two, I immediately felt the necessity of playing the rôle of savior, and so I begged her to go to bed. I would sit down by her for a few minutes, and then I was sure she would go to sleep. She laughed incredulously and gently closed the door behind her.

Feeling like a saint, I went into her bedroom after a while, that bedroom which before had filled me with so many fears. She was lying in a garment covered with lace, and smiled at me with eyes that were wet with tears.

I sat down by her pillow and she made herself a kind of nest on my lap. Then I began to talk to her. What I said I don't remember, nor do I know whether she listened to me. But she sighed deeply and seemed to be comforted. But my feelings were so much aroused that I felt that life had opened many a new door to me, as if I had solved a thousand riddles, and as though a thousand problems had been unveiled to me.

As soon as I noticed that she was fast asleep I laid her head gently back upon the pillows, picked up the keys which lay on the table in the sitting room, and walked down to the outer door. I stroked the shutter of the shop as she had done, and then I walked home in tears.

The next morning I sent her back the keys with a bunch of violets, but I never visited her again.

This is the story of my first cocotte supper, and there have been very few since in my life.

CHAPTER XVIII

I RETURN TO THE SPARTAN LIFE

I HAD had nearly a year of a life of luxury and comparative wealth where I had had no struggle or worries, during which I had taught little and learned less in the banker's house—or at least within the influence of its atmosphere. And then I suddenly felt a kind of homesickness for poverty again.

I felt homesick for my little corner in the August-strasse where I had been blessed with such a sense of exercising my mental activities to the limit of their capacities, even though it cost the last ounce of my strength, and where I had been so happy, solitary and poverty-stricken as I was, and where my guide and friend had been the sacred fury which possessed me.

My conscience told me that I was getting too comfortable and too slack. I saw that I was wasting my mornings. Whether I went to my lectures or lay in bed, the result was the same. I felt that I had no will power left, and the future which I had pictured to myself had long since vanished into smoke.

The hours which I spent during the lessons in the afternoon had become as burdensome to me as they probably were to my pupils. There was but little sympathy between us. We did not care for one another very much, and we were both only too happy if we could leave one another in peace. I had got into the habit of reading while they were supposed to be learning their lessons, and had allowed this to get such a hold of me that my sense of duty reproached

me. If I was disturbed I could get very cross, and then later on I was ashamed when I found mistakes in the exercise books when they were given back, which I ought to have noticed.

The overheated rooms gave me a continual sense of discomfort, and when I came out on to the wintry street at the end of the lessons, which was often at nine or ten in the evening, I felt a sense of relief, as if I had escaped from suffocation in a hot bath.

I counted up my money and found that I had saved several hundred marks, and, besides, I had received a lottery bond of the Hungarian government as a Christmas present, which I could turn into cash at any moment. I felt that if I were to reduce my expenditure to the point to which I had reduced it in the old days, I could live for six months or even more without starving, and by that time the writing which was to insure my future success would assuredly be ready.

So one January morning I drove out to the Auguststrasse and was received with open arms. My little room in the attic was occupied by a young business man, but he could easily be moved into the larger room next door, for the girl who occupied it, and whose morals were not above reproach, had long since been informed that she must move to some other sphere of operations.

But my return to this place of refuge did not necessarily imply the giving up of my established position. I did not know whether in my enervated condition I should be able to withstand the attacks of poverty again. And I also felt uncertain whether I should be able to keep a stiff upper lip if I again had to endure starvation, for this time I should have no support or hope.

I had a bitter fight over this question, but the longer it lasted the greater became my longing for the martyrdom which was necessary to give my mission as a writer its consecration.

I walked about the dark streets for hours, and so it happened that late one evening I came to the Friedrichshain and to the simple railing which surrounds the graves of those who fell in the revolution of 1848. I regarded this spot as sacred for national reasons, and I had often offered up a silent prayer there.

An inner voice told me, "Here you will find out what you have to do," and that which I had prayed for came to pass. "These men died for their ideals," the voice continued, "and you cannot even find enough courage to escape from the Capua in which your will power, your talent, and your holy belief in your destiny are slowly perishing."

The next morning I requested an audience with the mother of my charges and had the satisfaction of realizing that my intention to leave her service aroused lively regret, one might even say consternation. I was, therefore, able to take the consolation with me that any suspicion of having neglected my duty had existed only in my own brain and that I should be able to leave the house which had brought so many new and valuable experiences into my life, with the reputation of having done my duty properly.

I wrote to my friend Mathilde of the step which I had taken, somewhat reluctantly. But she was, above all, the person to whom I owed it to give an account of my action, for it was she, after all, who had brought me into the lap of luxury. But I need not have been afraid, for her answer not only approved, but applauded my action. "For I feel," she wrote, "that

if you think that you had better abandon your present way of life so as to continue your development, you will be committing a crime if you do not follow this inner guidance."

Now I sat again in my corner in the attic in front of the table covered with American cloth, and drank weak coffee again in the morning, for I had given away my delicate tea service to my previous landlady, whose grief at my departure was easily assuaged. And when the bells rang at noon I trotted down with my old bravado along the Friedrichstrasse to the Students' Restaurant, the dishes of which I ate with an absolute contempt of death.

My manner of life was now again entirely that of a poor student, but my outlook on life had altered very considerably.

The shy and awkward boy of those days had made room for a young man who moved about with self-confidence, and a certain sense of indifferent security, not afraid to attract the attention of the people around him, who was happiest, indeed, if a woman, or more than one, in fact, looked at him with interest.

I did not find myself at all at home in the Students' Restaurant, and when I climbed the steps which led to it I looked over my shoulder so as to assure myself that nobody had seen me come in. If one were to judge by my well-fitting English suit, and my beard, which grew ever more luxuriantly, I ought to have been eating at Dressel's or Uhl's. But there were plenty of other fairy princes in disguise here. A cloud of Jockey Club often penetrated the malodor of the cheap food, and occasionally an eyeglass which was insecurely held in the eye of its wearer fell into the thin soup.

My inner make-up corresponded very closely to my

exterior. When I had had more or less enough to eat I seemed to myself a superior kind of skeptic, casting a glance with understanding and pardon over the comedy of life, or else I was a man of the world weatherbeaten by destiny and thoroughly *blasé*, who was only waiting for death to bring him peace.

If I had had anything to drink, then I found myself possessed of a readiness of wit which surprised even myself. I remember one evening in particular, on which I was elected as chairman of a students' meeting, and when, owing to the brilliance of my satire, I called forth the raptures of the youngsters present.

Another evening, I was present as a guest of the Academic Literary Society, at which a young poet called Wildenbruch gave us a reading of his tragedy, "King Harold." My criticism was annihilating, and although a student called Litzmann, who was presiding, ought to have called me to account for it, he did not dare to do so. Thanks to my clothes, the cuts on my cheeks, and my beard, I was received everywhere where I appeared with flattering respect.

Yes, my beard. Let me tell you something about it and sing its praises. The famous Sudermann beard, which I adopted a decade later and which remained for twenty years the envy and also the joke of my contemporaries, was merely a bristly broom compared with the fair silken wave which in those days flowed over my chest. As the years went on the lighter color of the outer hairs disappeared and its softness was overcome by the hard usage of time. Graf Waldemar, Philippe Derblay, and—had he been born then—even Count Trast were all inferior to me as far as beards were concerned. It is a pity that I never had enough money to have a picture made of that beard. I think it would still be bewitching. I spread

this adornment abroad like a peacock's tail for a whole year, but then I had it cut because I had become much more modest within.

At the same time I must not mislead you with the picture I have drawn of myself, if I call your attention to the comic side of things. I was a foolish youngster, anyhow, and I never lost the crushing feeling of the contrast between that which I really was and the imaginary picture which I had formed of myself.

Also, I never for one moment took my eyes off my future goal. I went on learning, I went on writing, and endeavored daily to be worthy of the mercy which had been granted me when I had recovered my freedom again. My attic saw many a pain and many an ecstasy, and I was continually consecrated by solitude. I had only one familiar spirit in the world, and that was Otto Neumann, with whom I occasionally lived. He had his younger brother Adolf with him—the land president of Lippe—and was bringing him up as though he were his father. They lived together in furnished apartments in the third story of a house in the Wilhelmstrasse, and he provided for himself and his brother by giving such lessons as came his way. He was a friend who never failed the numerous friends who surrounded him, and he displayed a hospitality which many a rich man might well copy.

There was a drawer in the table by his sofa, in which there always stood a pot of dripping and a loaf of bread. It was an understood thing among his visitors that everyone, as soon as he came into the room, went straight over to the table and, whether the host invited him or not, helped himself to the contents. I was not above helping myself, either, for, although my savings saved me from starvation, bread and dripping is a thing which one can always eat.

It happened, also, not seldom that there was a bottle of spirits in the table from which one might help oneself. This would have been brought by one of his friends who was a distiller already on a large scale, a very talented young man who, we all knew, would some day do great things. His great specialty was an imitation of Jamaica rum, and here we had to assist him at times in our capacity as specialists. Every connoisseur knows that the real Jamaica rum may be distinguished from the imitation by the fact that if it is rubbed on the palm of the hand it smells like bread which has gone sour. And on one occasion when I was asked to give my opinion and confirmed the success of his imitation, quite decisively, I received the indignant reply:

"Yes, I know that, all right. All I want to know is whether it has not got too much of a sour-bread smell."

Yes, that was a very clever young man.

But my friend also provided in his household for the satisfaction of our deeper needs. A winding stair led from the corridor of his flat to the attics, so that it was not necessary to open the hall, to climb the ordinary flight of stairs, and to ring the bell. One thus always felt that one had a sense of privacy, and this was very important, for above him there were five or six attic rooms the windows of which looked down from the extreme top of the house, round and pardoning like the eyes of God. These were inhabited by a little company of dear little chorus girls who sang and danced all night long in the cheaper form of variety show, and made up for it by sleeping all day.

If one went up and said good morning to them in the dusk of evening, they would answer with a little scream, or sometimes there was no scream, but there were always two wide-open arms and two half-open

lips which whispered sleepily an unnecessary, "Git out." They seemed to have a standard of morals which forbade them to receive lovers in their room, for one never heard a strange man's voice there, and one never found the room bolted.

The modesty of their demands was really touching. Five oranges made five small people happy, and if anyone wished to enjoy a tablet of chocolate worthily she would knock first of all on the walls right and left, whereupon two lightly clad neighbors would appear, beaming with joy to get their share of the generous gift. They would not touch liqueurs. They had enough of them in the evening, they declared, and our distiller was not very popular with them, although that was perhaps not the only reason. As far as I was concerned I regret to have to confess that I was unable to avail myself thoroughly of this paradise, owing to the fact that an emotion which I suppose I may call passion without any exaggeration, was at that time the mistress of my heart and of my senses.

By the *bonne fortune* which seems to attend most young men I had come into tender relations with a lady for whom I did not care at all, but who happened to be there and who insisted on my attentions.

She was a woman who had been divorced from a legal official, and, owing to the fact that she had a small income, was able to live the life which a great city permits to all those women who are hungry for freedom beyond the limits of ordinary middle-class morality.

I do not remember visiting her in her room in the *pension* in the Jägerstrasse more than two or three times, but that was quite enough to make me desire passionately to get free from her as soon as possible. The only thing was I did not know how to do so, for

in my inexperience I felt that I was absolutely bound to somebody who had shown herself so generous with her confidence.

She was a tall, thin woman, with a domineering manner, and her caresses came dangerously near to being like an attempt to secure mastery over me, and these were all qualities of which I had never thought very highly.

I suppose that my readers will have recognized at once that this cannot really be the woman of whom I want to tell them, but have patience, my heroine will appear shortly.

It happened on a Thursday evening when I had to meet my friend at the usual rendezvous that she said:

"To-day let us go to the Löwenbräu; there is a very interesting group which consists principally of women in my situation who meet once a week there. There will be a few men who belong to one or another of us, as you do to me. You don't mind going, do you?"

I was only too glad to go, in my relief at the idea that I should not be obliged to be alone with her, and a few minutes later we walked through the smoky atmosphere of the main restaurant to a low table at which ten or twelve young and pretty women were sitting, who met us with a smile of lively curiosity. There was only a sprinkling of men among them, two or three as young as I was, and an elderly plump gentleman, who subsequently turned out to be a famous translator, whose name I had often seen in the "Reclam" edition of famous books.

My friend introduced me and made room for me by her side, for, as she said, "I belonged to her."

But I was not inclined to occupy myself with her more than was necessary, and turned my attention—it is true, with a certain sense of embarrassment, but

I do not think anybody noticed it—to the circle of the women, all of whom pleased me more than the lady friend "to whom I belonged."

They sat in a long row, these women with their dubious pasts, people whose lives had suffered shipwreck, whose hopes had been shattered, and whose curiosity with regard to life had been satisfied. There they sat looking forward to fresh destinies which they were in reality unable to meet.

One was pale and thin and languishing; another was plump and tender, without will power; another was a simple fool full of a freezing aristocratic manner; another was wild and burned up with a fever of life; another was a portly lady, phlegmatic, and determined to have her own way. Each of them showed plainly the history of her life.

And then there was one in whose presence my power of summing up and criticizing character was lost as our eyes met.

What was that? What *was* that? What did this glance mean which shot across at me from two half-hidden, gloomy, fiery, questioning, commanding, searching, beseeching eyes, for they were all that at once! What did she mean by this glance? It seemed to say to me, "*You belong to me.*" And I suppose that my glance replied in return, "As you do to me," for a slight smile played for a minute around the corners of her haughty little mouth.

She was a brunette in her prime. Her forehead seemed overcast with shades which lay around her like a burden. Her eyebrows were heavy and widely separated; the nose was short and gently molded; her cheeks were brown and covered with a bloom like a peach. On her upper lip there was a fine, dark shimmer which only served to intensify the womanly

beauty of the picture. There she sat, she who belonged to me from this moment on, as I belonged to her for all eternity. There was no fear and no sense of resistance. Just as two currents in the water flow toward each other and carry along with them jetsam which floats and tosses on them, so did we two human beings unite our separate existences, to be carried along for the rest of our lives by the waves until we reached that sea in which we should forget ourselves and the world.

I pulled myself together with some trouble, and turned back again as indifferently as I could to my friend, asking her who the lady was who was sitting at the other end of the table.

She gave me an angry look which gleamed like a knife. "Oh, she interests you, does she?"

"Not very much," I replied, "but she reminds me very much of somebody whom I know, that is all."

And then I found out that she was a Baroness X. Y., the wife of a noble from the east of the Elbe, who had got rid of her after he had discovered her amorous relations with his best friend and neighbor. She was said to be living in Berlin with her lover at such times when it was not necessary for him to be present on his estates.

She laid a special emphasis on this fact. I presume in order to scare me off forever from any attempt to make her acquaintance, but a voice cried within me: "Be glad to share poverty and shame and everything else with her, for if she has committed any crime, you have done no less."

And then the plump translator drew me into a conversation in the course of which I had to display my knowledge of various foreign literatures, but meanwhile our glances met again and again, and each time

we drew nearer to each other, for each glance spoke still more unmistakably the language of destiny.

It was about midnight when the company arose. I maneuvered and she maneuvered, and as the translator had got hold of my friend, although she did not mean to move from my side, it suddenly happened that we were standing close to each other.

"Who *are* you?" was her first remark in a careful whisper, for my friend was walking immediately in front of us on the arm of the translator, watching us over her shoulder.

"I am nothing as yet," I replied, softly, "but who you are I know already."

"I noticed that you asked Gerda about me," she whispered, "but that means that you know nothing about me, that you do not realize that I am twice as much bound since I regained my freedom, and that that is a torture to me. Will you help me?"

"I will do anything which lies in my power," I replied, "but how do you know that I shall not be a burden to you instead of a help?"

"*I* am the only person who can be a burden," she exclaimed, "and the only question is whether you can carry me."

Therewith she laid her arm on mine, and each of us trembled as they met; then, looking in front of her with an anxious glance, she continued in a low tone:

"You must take Gerda home now, but say good-by to her in front of her house and come to the Café Bauer. I shall be waiting for you at the door under the protection of the porter. Will you come?"

By this time we had reached the corner at which my friend turned off. She stood waiting for me and gave us both the same deadly glance which I had seen earlier in the evening. Then she took a tender

farewell of my companion and I was alone with her. Immediately a flood of reproaches burst over my devoted head.

"Do you think I did not notice how you were flirting with her the whole evening? Do you think I don't know that you have arranged to meet her? But I will take care to revenge myself on that lady. I will write her friend a letter and tell him all about it. I will make it impossible for her to appear in our circle; I will take care that she is cut by everybody. Just you wait and see."

"If you are going to do that," I said, "we may just as well say good-by forever," for we had by now reached the door of her house.

"Just as you like," she retorted, angrily. "It is not as if you gave me very much, for I can buy sweets and flowers myself."

Instead of answering her I raised my hat and went away, but I could hear her voice behind me for some time:

"Stop a moment! Stop a moment! I didn't meant that. Stop a moment!"

I quickened my steps, and so did she. I began to run, and so did she. And behind me I could hear her panting: "Wait a moment! I can tell you stories about her which will make you open your eyes. Wait a moment! Wait a moment!"

We had already begun to arouse the laughing curiosity of the people we met, and I should finally have fallen into her hands again if I had not had the good fortune to catch a tram at the corner of the Mauerstrasse which took me rapidly away from her. The only difficulty was that it was in the wrong direction. I thus lost a lot of valuable time, and when I finally reached the Café Bauer by a detour, the porter

told me that it was true a lady had waited for some time beside him, but that she had then begged him to get her a cab and had driven off.

So it was all over. She was lost forever!

No, not forever, for even if I did not know her address there were ways and means enough of finding it out. I had only to go to the register at the police office, where everyone had to report his or her address; or I might have asked the translator, whose name was certainly in the address book, and even if he did not know it himself, it would not have been difficult for him to find it out.

I could not eat, I could not sleep. I was obsessed by the one thought, how could I see her again?

I went and visited the portly gentleman, but I could not summon up enough courage to ring his door bell, for I thought to myself, "What will he think of you if you meet him in the company of a lady who is a friend of his, and he now learns that you are endeavoring to get to know his friend secretly and behind his back?"

I also went to the police office, but before the official could return with the information for which I had asked him I had dashed down the stairs again. Why, I do not know. I do not think it was cowardice, but a small remnant of decency and sound will power which drove me from the place. I knew that if I once got that slip of paper in my hands, no power on earth would be sufficient to bring me back to the path I was following at present. I could not help following that other road, and that would perhaps bring me to a precipice. That had meanwhile become clear to me.

If the other woman carried out her devilish plan of separating my new friend from her natural protector, so that she had one day to face life without friends,

without support, and perhaps even without money, what could a person like myself then offer her, who could scarcely keep his own head above water?

Or, on the other hand, supposing that her position was assured, perhaps because she had independent means, or was even rich, what would my part be then? Once I came under the influence of her atmosphere, should I be able to carry on my poverty-stricken and hard-working existence for another day? Would I not, united with her by love, be much more likely to slip into the way of life which she considered natural, owing to my sense of devotion or my weakness, or out of a sense of shame? How could I eat and drink and enjoy myself at her side when even the two excursions I had made with the other woman had represented a considerable pecuniary sacrifice to me? I thought with horror of what I might become under these circumstances, or would perhaps be obliged to become. Here I felt that everything was at stake. I was gambling with my life, and perhaps with hers, too.

Oh, I had a bitter fight with myself which lasted for weeks, nay, months. I have often slipped passed that Löwenbräu restaurant on a Thursday evening to have the pleasure of seeing her shadow at least pass me by. But she never came again. I only saw my late friend and withdrew into myself terrified.

Finally my passion became less violent and yielded to other emotions connected with my daily life. But her picture haunted me for many years and has affected my writing. I should never have written my novel, *Once upon a Time*, had I never met her, even if the form of the heroine has gradually altered from a person who is dominated by increasing coldness and skepticism into her opposite. And I can still trace her influence in many other things which I have written.

I met her only once again. One winter evening, four or five years later, she passed me in the Leipzigerstrasse on the arm of a gentleman who looked like a landed proprietor. Her glance fell upon me indifferently and she obviously did not recognize me. But I, although I had long since got over the pain which she had caused me, fell back against the door of the shop which I was just about to enter, overcome with a flood of emotion.

When I had recovered myself she had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX

THROUGH THE TWILIGHT

THE summer which followed this critical event saw me solitary and devoted to tranquillity in my attic in the Auguststrasse, where nothing had altered since I first took up my residence there two years before.

But the lad who had sat there, working half in hope and half in pure love of his work, taking advantage of every free hour to get on with the writing of the novel which he had begun, was a very different person from the stalwart young man who had begun his struggle with the fight of his life and with inward poverty, but with immense stores of energy and ready to endure to the end.

This young man was tired, wearied of the eternal struggle between the studies which he had undertaken as a duty and the writing which always led him astray. He was wearied of the hopeless outlook which both showed him, and above all of the consciousness that his life seemed to be standing still while every fiber in him called for action and advancement.

I had never for one moment regretted leaving the rich banker's house, nor did I feel the pinch of my new poverty. But what would happen when my savings, which were beginning to shrink alarmingly in spite of all my economy, came to an end?

I pulled myself together and fought down the worry which, reviving my memory of that hungry period, threatened to paralyze all my efforts, and plunged

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into the abstract trains of thought which led straight from the professor's chair through my head into the vast inane.

Paulsen had meanwhile become my guide and my idol and Kant's philosophy had become the sum of all that had been thought and of all that there was to think. His system rose up before me like a mighty romance, finely constructed in every part, until it took my breath away, with events rising to the proper climax, perspectives, catastrophes, and glimpses of distant views, and Paulsen, who wanted no blind followers, had taken care that I did not overlook the weaknesses in the system. After Kant came Hobbes, who held me in thrall. His contemptuous negativism, which presently turned out to be a positive defense of the idea of power, helped me to find a sense of proportion as against the narrow views of middle-class liberalism. And however much I might hate Bismarck as the man who had destroyed my pride in German citizenship, I could not but fall on my knees before the fury with which he attacked his problems and opponents.

So bitterly opposed was I to the development which the German spirit had taken toward the end of the seventies, that I once ventured to blurt out, in one of the meetings of Paulsen's seminar, that what Germany needed most was another Jena. And I shall never forget the surprised yet pleased expression with which our beloved teacher rebuked this shameless outburst of rage.

Well, thank God, we have had the new Jena and I can test what it has brought us daily when I open my morning paper and see the fresh misery and shame which have been poured over us.

When the term came to an end, I made up my mind

to go home. I had not seen my family for two years and a half, and I felt that if I spent a few months in peace in the old home I might hope to face the storms of poverty which would unfailingly break over me again, with a better spirit.

But this time I was careful to lay aside a sufficient sum to bring me back to Berlin, and made myself a solemn promise not to touch it. I did not mean to go through another winter like the terrible one I had experienced. And so one sunny summer morning I turned up unannounced at my home.

My mother looked at the long-bearded, strange man in front of her with astonishment, and then threw herself at me with a cry, while the hard, careworn face of my father lighted up with a touch of kindliness which made me very happy. My brothers and cousins came in beaming, and I sat there as if I were in a dream.

Two and a half years, and what years! Whole worlds separated the poor little student who had left home then, clad in his inexperience as with a coat of gilded cardboard armor, from the wearied and wounded young man who returned. Wearied of his vanity and his blindness and wounded in his disappointed ambition and the failure of his youthful efforts.

I felt that my student days were over, and yet I had achieved nothing, absolutely nothing, not even the foolish title of Doctor.

That was the result of five long years, filled with hopes and enthusiasm, overrich perhaps in follies, but also not poor in honest industry and definite endeavor. And yet a comforting feeling told me that I had not altogether wasted my time. I only needed to measure myself with those who were about my own age, the Referendars and other young men just beginning their professional life, who lived in my own home town.

How narrow and small they had remained, how unready they were in argument, and how miserably they failed if any strain were put upon their general knowledge! Their interests still turned around the beer table, and if their humor vented itself in some joke, it would take the form of something which I had long since thrown on the scrap heap.

No, I could see that I really had grown and that I had no reason to despair. But my weariness was still there, and it did not seem as if I could get rid of it.

I was eagerly anxious to conceal my poverty, even from my mother's knowledge, but on one occasion she must have peeped inside my purse, for when I looked at it again I found a twenty-mark piece which had got there in some mysterious fashion.

To strangers I pretended that I was living on my literary work, which was very handsomely paid for. I kept away from the inn as far as possible, and also I no longer visited the houses where I had once been hospitably received. I could scarcely even return politely the greetings of the wives and daughters of the better-class people whom I met in the street. The looks which they gave me, although they were full of admiration, and in some cases of suspicion, were sufficient reason for me to avoid the streets where I was likely to meet them. I preferred to wander off into the woods and to spend hour after hour in dreaming. And this unwillingness to meet the people of my home stayed with me for many years, even when I had my reputation to support me.

But I found one friend and protector whose sympathy and kindness have remained of immeasurable value to me ever since. That was that giant of a man who had once delivered me from the apothecary's shop, my friend, Doctor Kittel of Russ, who at that

time often came over to us, as he was again looking after the doctor's practice there. I have also to thank him for an experience which shook me to the base of my being, and which, I believe, has continued to influence me, consciously or unconsciously, to this day.

One hot sunny morning his carriage stopped before my door, and his red beard, which everybody knew for miles around, shone like a flame over the white dust coat which he was wearing. He wished to know whether I should like to go off with him to see a post-mortem examination which he had to carry out by order of the legal authorities. I, anxious to widen my knowledge of the world in every direction, assented joyously, and so we drove for some miles between the bare fields, through small villages and widespread forests, until we reached a lonely farm which did not differ in any particular respect from any of the other peasants' houses scattered over heath and moor, wherein the inhabitants of the plain lived. It was a tumbledown dwelling thatched with straw, with many a brown spot shining through its walls where the plaster had fallen off: stables of gray wood, a wooden barn, a garden, manure heaps, pigs, and poultry.

There had been a festival recently, for some withered pine branches and wreaths of sweet flag hung over the tottering door of the house. Through the open windows came the hoarse sound of hymns.

As our two carriages entered the courtyard—for the legal commission consisting of the judge, his clerk and beadle, had joined us in silence—the sound suddenly ceased and a little group of excited and angry people appeared before the door.

There broke from it an elderly woman with a red nose and two shifty, flashing eyes, framed in a black

headcloth, who came to meet us, screaming and wringing her hands.

She wanted to know what our business was and why we wanted to interrupt a decent burial which would have to be over within the hour, as the teacher could not spare any more time. Did we think that it was not merely an accident? Her daughter had fallen into the deep ditch in the dark and had not been able to get out again. She had already told the gendarme this, as he could testify. At this the gendarme appeared, but he did not bear out her statement.

He thrust the wretched woman roughly to one side and ordered them to bring out the coffin, which immediately appeared at the dark doorway, carried by four men. Within it lay, brilliantly illuminated by the morning sunshine, the body of a young girl which looked as if it were made of stone or wax, but which also seemed to have been pressed flat, as if she were only a bas-relief of herself.

"Take it off to the barn," ordered the gendarme. A man who had attracted my attention because he had been pacing up and down in obvious despair along the wall of the house and the garden fence, half hidden by the little group of mourners, now jumped forward and made haste to open the door of the barn.

"That is the stepfather," said the gendarme to us in explanation. "He married the girl's mother here four weeks ago."

We all looked at him. He was a handsome-looking man, not older than thirty, with a neatly curled mustache, such as he had probably acquired when he was serving with the Guards at Potsdam. One of the doors was taken off its hinges and placed upon two casks in the brilliant light which poured into the barn. The coffin was laid beside it.

"Everybody get out of this," the gendarme ordered the mourners, who had pressed behind the body into the barn. They fell back a little, but then stood like a wall, and it was not until the young teacher arrived—for he was employed instead of the clergyman to perform the ceremony, so as to save expense—that he succeeded in getting them back to the house, where they proceeded to while away the time by singing hymns. Even the mother was obliged to move away from the neighborhood of the coffin, while the stepfather resumed his pacing up and down between the house and the garden on the other side of the courtyard.

The doctor gave a sign, the linen cover was thrown back, and four experienced arms laid the white-clad body flat upon the door.

"Take her chemise off," ordered the doctor.

I was shocked. The poor corpse which could no longer protect itself was to be exposed to the gaze of so many men, including my own. I had still continued to believe at the back of my mind that we too would be obliged to withdraw before the actual dissection began.

But nothing of the kind happened. The body was raised up, the chemise was drawn over its head, and then the corpse was laid back, exposed in all its young beauty, compelled to reveal the secrets which its modesty had guarded to the sunshine and all these strangers.

Instinctively filled with reverence, I folded my hands.

How different this picture was to that of a woman whose body one touched to satisfy the passion of a moment! How much purer it was, how much more sacred, and at the same time so much more natural, separated immeasurably from and raised above all earthly wishes and desires.

It was a human being like any other, suffering like any other, except that its sufferings were at an end.

The little head had bent gently to the side as the corpse had been laid back on the door, and now it lay almost on the left shoulder, and a plait of brown hair lay like a shadow between head and shoulder.

The face was not beautiful, and yet, too, it was beautiful in the serenity of its repose, with the eyes nearly closed, just permitting the hint of a glance to shine through like mother of pearl. The small, finely cut nose, the sharp line of which perhaps death alone had known how to form, the blue lips in whose parting a question or a wish seemed still to linger.

The doctor took two lancets out of their case and put them down by his side. My heart seemed to stand still.

He made an incision, noiselessly, as if he had done no more than pass his hands over the body or stroke it, and the marble picture was destroyed. A gaping cavity appeared suddenly in its middle. At the same time a horrible stench spread itself around, burdensome, as though it carried some disease, horribly suffocating, biting, robbing one of strength and the power to think.

"Anyone who wishes to smoke may do so," said the judge, "but please be careful," and he pointed to the sheaves which filled the barn on either side.

I did not smoke. I desired to endure the horror of this experience as a sacrifice before the altar of this hour, which was giving me so much that was terrible in the way of experience, something which I had never dreamed of before.

The doctor went on with his work, talking in short, sharp sentences as he did so. The judge dictated, and his clerk wrote. One organ after the other was

examined, and then laid aside, while the stench increased.

Finally the stomach was opened and its contents emptied.

"Dark burns—signs of arsenic poisoning," said the doctor, and then, while a broad-necked bottle was brought from the carriage, so that the organ could be sealed up for the subsequent chemical test in the laboratory, I happened to look over toward the house, where the young master of the house and husband now crouched on the doorstep in a state of utter collapse. I was almost sorry for him in his complete abandonment, which might perhaps cost him his head, for that he was the murderer I no longer doubted. Perhaps he had wished to get rid of the life which stood between him and his possession of the farm—perhaps—but who could tell?

Other portions of the stomach were also placed in the bottle, and this was then carefully sealed.

And then I saw the doctor weigh something which looked like a blood-red bag in his hand. He cut into it and an expression of surprise and almost of horror showed itself in his eyes.

"Gravida," he said, in a tone much deeper and more like a growl than his ordinary voice.

"Gravida," repeated the judge with a deep breath, and the writing secretary repeated it twice, nodding his head.

"Gravida," said the gendarme, although he can have known no Latin. The foreign word passed from mouth to mouth, as though it was a doom passed by fate. And so it was.

"That alters the picture a good deal," said the judge, gravely. "We have now indications that it may be a case of suicide."

At the same time the doctor lifted up something which looked like a rosy-colored little doll made of spun glass on two fingers.

"A fœtus, three months old," he said. "Put it into spirits of wine and seal it up like the rest."

"What is the explanation of all this?" I ventured to ask. "Poisoned and then also drowned?"

"That is a combination which often occurs," replied the judge. "When the terrible pains which the arsenic causes begin, people often throw themselves into water to put an end to their sufferings."

"Poor thing! Poor thing!"

The little head which had now sunk quite on to the shoulder lay there so peacefully, and the blue lips were silent, as they had been silent when necessity had driven that child to her death.

I would have given anything to stroke her cheek just once, but I did not wish to do anything theatrical before these hard men, and I therefore thrust my half-outstretched hand quickly into my pocket.

A pause ensued. The doctor had cut his finger, and, in order to avoid the inevitable risk of blood-poisoning, had poured some undiluted carbolic acid on to the wound, no matter how much it hurt him, and covered it with a bandage.

Meanwhile I pieced together the whole drama which had been played out here. The poor devil over there who sat with his hands clasped together, conscious of his guilt, and continually looking over at us, had perhaps first of all played about with the pretty daughter whom he perhaps imagined to be a good match, or perhaps it had only been a love affair without any immediate prospects, because the mother had no intention of letting the control of the farm slip out of her hands. But then she herself had looked favor-

ably on him, and the weakling, faced with the choice of keeping his word to the daughter whom he had seduced, or of selling himself unconditionally to the elderly mother, had yielded to temptation and let the devil take his love and his honor.

Now he sat there, hopeless and haunted by the furies. He might not be a murderer in the eyes of the world, but he was one forever before his own conscience.

I wondered what the poor girl must have gone through, thus doubly deserted, when she felt the child growing in her body, continually and without mercy, while the man who belonged to her slunk about beside her, embarrassed and shy, obliged to pay court to the elderly woman who had fallen in love with him. And then one day some kindly peddler had pressed the powder into her hand which promised her release.

Poor thing! Poor thing!

Her head alone had remained undamaged and undisturbed, looking quietly on in all the loveliness of death at the desecration of its body. But it now was its turn to be dissected. The doctor had suddenly picked up an instrument with teeth like a saw and proceeded to open the skull. "Good Heavens!" I cried, in horror, "but why must you do that?" and made a motion as though to stop his hand. He excused himself with something like a smile. "It is the law," he said, and went on with his work.

I could contain myself no longer. I dashed out of the barn and took my horror with me out into the loneliness of the stubble fields, and it was not until I heard the carriage drive up that I returned to the courtyard.

The coffin was just being brought out, this time with the lid screwed down, and was being taken back to the house.

"There is no necessity to make any arrests," I heard the judge say to the gendarme. "There is no danger of anyone running away or of hushing things up. We can already see what the end of the matter will be."

I do not remember how I got home. I did not come to myself until I was locked up in my gable room, unable to eat—the stench stayed in my nostrils and throat for five days—without being able to rest, and without being able to see a human face, and had to try my best to get over the horrors I had experienced, which I only succeeded in doing after hard fighting.

I felt that that unfortunate wretch was not so guilty, nor even the old woman who wanted a husband again. I felt that *I* was at fault, that *all men* were at fault, that this poor young girl had come to a bad end. For apart from her there were thousands and thousands every year who drowned themselves, suffocated themselves with charcoal fumes, or poisoned themselves with lysol, sending their last message to the world in the shape of a police report. And it was not only those alone whom we had on our consciences, but also all the hosts on the streets and in the quagmire of the brothels.

They had chosen this life, admittedly, but even if they had not chosen it they were compelled to go through it because we with our stronger wills had decided that it should be so.

My realization of the helplessness of all womankind before men grew large in me, and therewith arose the demand for a sense of responsibility which we young men scarcely dreamed of when we laughingly indulged in one feast of love after another.

I might, it was true, comfort myself with the thought that I had no reason to reproach myself with

any such tragedy, but that had been more a matter of instinct and was just as much the result of a thousand lucky accidents. But henceforth everything should be changed.

I would become an ascetic. I would be the priest of humanity, and brotherly love should reign where hitherto the scepter of sensuality had ruled.

Well, I never became an ascetic, decidedly not, and my realization of the helplessness of womankind had also not been able to maintain its ground with me, for if anything is a vexed question and not oversavory, the appearance of sanctity is sure to tumble some day from its artificial and lofty perch. But the memory of that summer morning passed over into my flesh and blood and had often knocked at my heart when some wild chance was ready to free me from all responsibility.

My novel, *The High Hymn*, may serve to testify to this strain of thought—it grew in me for twenty years before I wrote it down—and if it has been mistakenly regarded as a defense of free love, that is not my fault.

If anyone must find a moral in it it is this: "You men, honor and protect the holy possession which you have in women, for otherwise your own hand will turn the finest, most faithful woman who was ever created to bring you happiness into a harlot."

The holidays passed, and as the frosty nights began my heart began to grow chill with the apprehension of coming want. But there was no use putting it off. Otherwise I might find myself obliged to stay at home again as "the student who had wasted his time."

This time, I did not accept any money. I told everyone who offered it, even my mother, that I had

enough, and then I left home even more tired than I had been when I arrived.

I found my beloved work corner, which I had been obliged to give up for reasons of economy, in the possession of a stranger, and this time I was unable to dislodge him, and so I was obliged to go and look for other quarters.

I found them in the Schützenstrasse, close to the Dönhoffsplatz, in the shape of a little room to which one had access, as in the Auguststrasse, through the living room of the landlord, but here nobody slept in it, as had been the case with the dear friends whom I had now left.

It was a regular prostitutes' quarter. There were prostitutes in every story, prostitutes on all the stairs, prostitutes at noon, prostitutes at night. When I went to bed, and when I got up, I could always hear the caresses or the scoldings of the prostitutes in the next room.

Well, so much the better, I thought. I was living in the middle of the people's ordinary life, and I also had the aching sensation of voluntary self-humiliation.

I ought to have begun the treadmill of going to my lectures and giving lessons, but I no longer cared for either. It is true that I put my name down for such lectures as were necessary, and I also examined the advertisement columns of the newspapers, but when I ought to have been going to work I remained sitting at my writing table.

From that time onward there was no clear daylight in my life. The pictures have now become blurred in my memory, but for many years I had only been able to think of that period of my existence as a kind of twilight condition in which I lived on without any control over myself, incapable of making a resolution,

incapable even of looking the necessary facts of the day's work, or even of the hour, squarely in the face.

I could scarcely summon up courage to leave my room. I swallowed whatever my landlady brought me. I sat and read, and did not know afterward what I had been reading.

I only began to wake up when my lamp burned on my table in the evening. Then that which I had observed during the day took on a kind of uncertain life. Strange thoughts arose to torture me, and while my pen began its first uncertain movements, a wild idea arose in my imagination to comfort me, only to be immediately suppressed—"Perhaps you will make good, after all."

I was occupied with writing out a philosophic treatise which some day, when I was more fortunate, I hoped to use as the thesis for my degree. I called it "The Fourfold Root of Teleology." Anyone who knows anything of the subject will realize at once from the title how conceited I was, for it must immediately remind him of the title of the first work of a famous man with which it seemed to challenge comparison.

I had long been interested in the history of the idea of the aim of life.

I saw in it the last refuge of the ordinary view of God, which I considered it necessary to examine historically and critically, so that I might at the same time attack God himself.

This was my amusement in the evening, at which I worked until my artificially excited brain refused to work any longer, long after midnight. The next morning the torture began again, and so it went on for weeks and for months.

I must consider it an immense piece of good fortune

that my friend Mathilde had come to Berlin for the winter months. She was living in a *pension* in the Köthenerstrasse, and I was allowed to visit her once a week in the early evening. Then she would go herself into the kitchen and prepare me a beefsteak, the very smell of which was a delight. In the meantime I sat still on the corner of the sofa, and the mere thought of being looked after and cared for by somebody whom I loved had such a good effect on my spirits that the torturing sense of tension in which I continually lived began to relax, and an uncontrollable sleepiness fell over me which often did not disappear until the beefsteak had become cold.

So I dragged myself on from one dark day to another. In a kind of mental catalepsy I watched how somebody who looked like myself, spoke as I did, and moved as I did, did a number of purposeless and hopeless things which just as well might have been left undone, no matter how necessary they appeared at the moment. I had managed to get some work from a lawyer, translations into French and English, which were fairly well paid for and kept me going for the time being. Also my friends Mathilde and Neumann helped me, so that I did not have to suffer physical want.

But as the winter drew to its close it became more and more clear to me that things could not go on like this any longer.

What was I to do? Should I look for a post like that in which things had been only too prosperous for me? Oh no! Otherwise my noble sacrifice would become a farce.

Away from Berlin, that was the solution. Creep off into some corner of the world where nobody knew my pride or my shame and where I could vegetate

and grow perfectly stupid, reduced to a condition of servitude, handed over from one property to another, like the inspectors in my own part of the world, who, as they gradually grew gray, still maintained their position as part of the furniture of the house, as a source of amusement, or of averting somebody's wrath, or as a boon companion or whipping boy.

Everybody was not so fortunate as my friend Reubekeul, who as a private tutor in a clergyman's family had not only found peace and pleasure in his work, but also a sweet little bride who was his strength and his hope, so that, once he had taken his examination as a teacher in a secondary school, he might hope to build up a modest but happy competence in some out-of-the-way place.

I could not hope for anything of the kind, and I did not wish to find it, either. There was no room for idyls in my life. I might fall by the wayside, collapse, go to the devil, and die by my own hand with a bitter laugh, but I could not accept a beggar's bread, which would only disgust me, from the ruins of what had been, not even in a mood of miserable resignation.

Away from Berlin! If I must go to the devil, the quicker I went the better.

I studied the advertisements in the *Kreuzzeitung* and *Post*, where I found plenty of posts such as I was looking for. I had my picture taken for the purpose of answering these advertisements—my noble beard had long since fallen a sacrifice to the scissors. I wrote applications and got answers, and, in short, one day I was able to tell my friend Mathilde with hypocritical satisfaction that my life was about to undergo a decisive change, which I hoped she would also thoroughly approve of.

She was much upset.

"Perhaps, however, there is another solution," she said.

I shrugged my shoulders with a laugh.

That was the twilight period of my life.

CHAPTER XX

HOW I WAS SAVED

IN the Dönhoffsplatz, opposite the statue of Freiherr von Stein, there stood in those days an inconspicuous building which had survived, from the period of bitter poverty during which it had been constructed, to see the prosperity of our Greater Germany. This was the Prussian House of Representatives. I happened to go in there one day in a mood of dejection and lonely misery, because I had nothing better to do with that part of the morning. And this visit opened out to me a new future.

I was very lucky. The Chamber was overfilled.

In a space partitioned off like a box in a theater there sat crowded together a little group of elderly gentlemen, all clothed in black, with the exception of one in the right-hand corner, the biggest and the most upright of the company, who wore the uniform of the Cuirassiers.

My heart began to beat fast. That was my enemy and the enemy of the people. Yes, that was that great scoundrel, Bismarck.

I did not understand at once what was happening. There was a little man with round glasses and a head like an owl—later on I discovered that his name was Windthorst—who was making a violent attack upon Bismarck. The latter bowed at intervals, smiled half in agreement and half in irony, and made notes on a piece of paper in front of him with an enormously long pencil.

When the little man had finished, Bismarck clapped his hands gently in a manner which might be either irony or politeness, one could not tell which. He then turned with some animation to his neighbor, an old gentleman with long white whiskers—that was the Minister for the Interior, Herr von Puttkammer, as the people around me whispered—and spoke to him with so much earnestness and force that it looked as if he were trying to drive his view into the Minister's head with a hammer. But suddenly he paid attention again. The name "Eugen Richter" had resounded from the President's seat. Bismarck stood up imperiously, drew himself up to his full stature, threw his pencil hastily on one side, and left the Chamber. His uniform vanished like a blue flame as the door closed behind him.

Eugen Richter, that was my man! That was the tribune of the people, who maintained an obstinate resistance against the prevailing obsequiousness to the throne and the furious attacks of the reactionary landed proprietors—one of the few men in Germany who had not sold his honor.

He spoke with a hoarse, metallic voice, and a snarl, as if he wished to pour floods of vitriol over his opponents, and as he spoke he kept his left shoulder advanced like a boxer.

That was the way to speak! That was what I wanted! He gave voice and strength to the conscience of a people who were perishing in serfdom. He gave us hope—hope of freedom. It seemed impossible that, if anyone attacked our proud oppressors so bravely, they should not confess that they were wrong, however stupid or dense they might be.

But that they did not do. On the contrary, when he had ended, there arose on the right of the Chamber,

where the ruling landed proprietors and the Landrats sat, a beautifully turned out and finely barbered gentleman, who replied to him with the rough voice of a corps student (oh, I knew them well, those self-sufficient idiots with their faces covered with sword cuts), who replied to him in terms which made me freeze with fury and anger. I had only one idea in my head: one ought to challenge the fellow—pistols—ten paces—shoot him down. That was the only kind of language he understood.

And then came Rickert, the famous leader of the "secessionists" who had recently separated from the National Liberals. Him I loved, loved from the first minute in which he began to speak. He was a man of medium height, in the fifties, with brown hair brushed back from his forehead, glasses which gave his face an expression of sharpness in spite of the kindly, eager eyes. He spoke eloquently, quietly, with a warm and tender pathos that was, perhaps, too tender. Ah! that was fine, to see that conservative pinned down and held up to judgment, but I had wished it to be done more sharply, more pitilessly, in terms which stabbed or had more of the poison of the scorpion in them. I felt as if I wanted to cheer him on to wilder efforts, and when he had finished I had the helpless feeling, "It is no use." But I loved him, loved him with a deep and almost pitying love, and I have always loved him, even though I felt that I had to part from him after working with him for nearly two years.

But I must keep closely to the order of events.

From that day on which I accidentally happened to enter the Prussian House of Representatives I had a new interest in life, in which I was presently deeply involved without making any effort to resist it.

Hitherto I had only given so much attention to politics as the average grumbling voter gives, and which is usually confined to grumbling, and then letting things rip, as if they existed on some other planet out of the range of ordinary eyes.

I suddenly realized that a drama was being daily played in my immediate neighborhood, in a spot which I could reach from my room in five minutes, which meant more than any theater, or life, or my country, or even my own fate.

Henceforward I was a regular visitor to the building in the Dönhoffsplatz, or, if nothing particular was happening there, at the gray palace at the other end of the Leipzigerstrasse, which was called the Reichstag Building, and which witnessed battles and startling events of a quite different caliber, for here world history was brought forth smoking hot from the oven.

Henceforth I read the parliamentary reports in the newspapers with an eager eye and beating heart, and what I did not understand I endeavored to master by hard work.

Of course, I could not help telling my friend Mathilde of my new interests, and when, the next time we met—at that time the negotiations with a Pomeranian landowner were very nearly completed—she asked me with a smile whether I would not prefer to stay in Berlin and take up politics, I had, for the first time since we had known each other, the horrible idea that she was making fun of me.

But she was doing nothing of the kind, for a few days later I received a letter from her in which she said that the representative of the Reichstag and Prussian House of Representatives for Danzig, Herr Landesdirektor Rickert, requested that I would call on him at his house at such and such an hour.

I dashed off to see her at once. I wanted to know what it meant. It only meant that she had spoken of me to Herr Rickert, whom she knew quite well, and that he had been of the opinion that it was always possible to find employment for my fresh and untapped energy, so long as it remained available.

So I sank back into my corner of the sofa, where I had before fallen in dull exhaustion, as if I had been struck by lightning, and could scarcely pull myself together.

At the hour named I rang the bell at his house in the Mathäikirchstrasse, to which he had summoned me.

He shook me heartily by the hand, gave me a keen but trusting look from eyes which hastily turned away, and then asked me what I knew, what I could do, and what qualifications I had for the career of a political journalist.

I was not a fool. I knew everything, I could do everything, and I was specially qualified for political journalism. Not only that, but I had specially prepared myself for it.

"Political economy?"

Yes, of course, I knew all about it. It was true that I had learned my Schmoller thoroughly, but it was not until later that I realized that I had not the faintest idea of the things which really mattered.

However, everything went well. First of all, I was to report myself at the office of the *Liberale Korrespondenz* and tell the editor, Herr Bartsch, that henceforward I was to undertake the duties of the parliamentary reporter. And therewith he dismissed me.

I had scarcely gotten out into the hall when he suddenly opened the door behind me and called after me:

"One question more. Are you a Jew?"

I said I was not.

"That is good," he replied. "It is true that I am the president of the Society for the Suppression of Antisemitism, but had you been a Jew I could not have employed you."

The office of the *Liberale Korrespondenz*, which had been founded by the "secessionists" as a hectograph sheet which aimed at supplying the papers with which they were in sympathy, with news, had its quarters in the courtyard of the same house in which Rickert lived.

Herr Bartsch, a fat man who thoroughly enjoyed his Moselle wine with Selters, good-natured, eloquent, but born to be ruled by somebody else, lived an unhealthy existence, anxiously devoted to duty, in a back room of the building, which he only left for a few hours on Sunday, so as to fill his lungs with fresh air for the whole following week, in the Tiergarten, which lay close at hand.

He received me, as a young and eager student, with the dull glance of the experienced schoolmaster, ready to give one help and to look after one thoroughly. Rickert had already told him about me, and the next morning I was to attend a meeting of the Prussian House of Lords. I had never been there before, for it had appeared to be too fine for me, in view of the humble circles which I had frequented. Now, however, I received an introduction to Herr von Forckenbeck, who had his seat in the House as Lord Mayor of Berlin, and when I received it I began to feel as if I were a member of the House myself.

The attendants received me with deep bows, and one of them showed me the way up a flight of stairs to a long lobby in which groups of noblemen walked

slowly up and down, or else went out to meet their friends. The lobby was lined with leather-covered chairs, inviting repose, and was filled with a blue smoke which spoke to me of a familiar scent which I drew into my nostrils with deep satisfaction. It seemed a very long time since I had enjoyed it, for it was the scent of genuine Havanas, which arose to heaven like the smoke of sacrifice in this temple of feudalism.

"There they go, in their multitudes," I thought, "the heroes of the novels which I have not yet written, those princes and counts whose lives are nothing but one long romance." I could almost touch them, and yet I was miles apart from them.

I should have liked to take them by the scruff of the neck and drag them off, if only for literary purposes.

And then Herr von Forckenbeck arrived, gave me a kindly hand—I knew his face already from the pages of the illustrated papers—and led me to a seat in the Members' Gallery where sat the blue-blooded ladies, whose husbands—or I should say consorts—gave their smiling approval to the trend of Prussian history.

What a serene peace ruled in the government of affairs below me. The gentlemen of "the other parties"—that is to say the mayors—were disposed of so summarily, and yet with such a gentle air of tolerance, that, had I been one of them, I should have held my peace from very shame.

In the two farther corners of the Chamber there were dark leather-cushioned sofas, like those in the lobby, in each of which a tall young gentleman was seated, looking taller than he was, by reason of the fact that he had stretched out his long legs to their fullest extent.

"Those must be very great nobles," I thought to myself, "otherwise they could not afford to lounge about as they are doing."

And I was not far wrong, for when the names were called for a division, both turned out to be princes, one with a name which was half French, the other with one which is written in gold in Prussia's history.

The report which I gave to the office in the evening, condensed into the ten lines for which they had asked me, was soon put upon the stone, and when I opened the *Berliner Tageblatt* the next morning I found my article on the front page, immediately under the leading article.

I looked at the first product of my pen which had been printed and sent forth into the world, with the greatest reverence. I said to myself, with a certain modest self-appreciation, that it must contain something of statesmanlike wisdom, otherwise so important a paper would not have given it such a prominent display. A few days later I received my ticket, giving me the entrée to the Press Gallery of the Reichstag, and then I felt that I was really a member of the profession.

By a fortunate chance I was given a seat on the lowest bench, immediately at the front of the gallery, so that I could look down at my leisure on the mighty dome of Bismarck's skull and satisfy myself that the three hairs with which the comic papers delighted to cover up his baldness did not exist. I also was able to observe how frequently the glass containing a pale yellow fluid, which some people declared consisted of cold tea, and others a fairly stiff mixture of brandy and water, had to be replenished. I also observed how that gigantic figure seemed to rise with his right arm when he placed his upright signature on the

papers laid before him, and how at times he snapped at his colleagues on the Ministerial bench. Sometimes I felt as if I had crept into his body and smiled and negatived as he was doing—and that he did with such a condescending grace—and sometimes I felt that it was I who was opposing myself and grumbling and being surprised—for every surprise with which he was met seemed like a sentence of death—and that it was I who looked down upon the pygmies around me with a speedily regained indifference, which none the less embittered his existence.

My hatred for him only dared to show itself in his absence. So long as he was present, the immense superiority of his external appearance and of his character was so strong that I could not feel any other emotion in myself but that of being inferior to him as a man.

And he seemed to be the only *man* among the puppets who sat on the Government bench. They appeared to be absolutely without independence of character. They all looked the same, behaved in the same way, and when they spoke it was as if a gramophone had been turned on. They were the perfect examples of that impersonal formalism which the good German subject calls "his superiors" or "officials."

But there was one day which I shall never forget—and never forget because it brought me a position and promotion—when I saw Bismarck as a real human being—in fact, rather too much of a human being.

One of the parties on the left—I believe that for which I was then working—had brought in an interpellation regarding the then usual influence exercised upon the voter, which had long been a crying scandal.

A network of people who could be trusted to look after the Conservative interest, from the office of the Landrat downward, was thrown over every electorate.

Every minor official, down to the humblest gendarme, and practically every landlord of an inn and every teacher, acted as an agent of the Government. It was taken as a matter of course that the landed proprietors would give their laborers the proper voting tickets and send them off to the voting booths like a flock of sheep, under the supervision of their inspectors, for anyone who ventured to kick against the pricks might be certain of immediate dismissal. But even the peasants and the small artisans in the country, if they were not already convinced adherents of the Government, found themselves compelled to do as their neighbors did, for the sake of peace. For the difficulties and troubles which threatened them, otherwise, were literally without end.

If it had not been for the towns which managed to preserve a certain amount of independence, Germany, or at least the northeastern portion thereof—for the Pope ruled in the south and west—would long since have been turned into a cemetery decorated with the black-and-white flag of Prussia.

That is, at least, what we thought in those days, and there are many people who think that history would have justified us.

The story of this influence exercised upon the voter, as I say, which had its origin in the government offices spread all over the country, was to be displayed to the world in all its shameless cynicism, although it dealt only with facts which were far too well known to allow of contradiction. And as a matter of fact the replies which the indignant parties of the Left received from the Right and from the Government were so embarrassed and so unconvincing that the Government and their supporters were certain of a moral defeat. No other was, of course, possible.

Then Bismarck got on his feet. In his nervousness he had already broken two pencils.

The Chamber was agog. He was never a pleasant person to quarrel with, but to-day he was a still more dangerous opponent.

We knew that he had his troubles—troubles in his family. His son Herbert, who at that time was rejoicing like a demigod in the fact that he was a bachelor, had a short time before, or so it was rumored, run away to Venice with the wife of a nobleman from Silesia, and had recently demanded permission from his father to agree to an early marriage with the lady. Rumor also added that Bismarck had shut himself in a room with his son, and had given him his word of honor while laying a pistol on the table, that he would put a bullet through his own head unless the son immediately gave up all intention of marrying the lady.

Knowing this, one had some idea of what kind of temper he was in and what one had to expect from him.

He began with his clear, almost barking voice—clearing his throat, swallowing, choking as usual. He was not a good speaker naturally, and it was not until he was carried away by his subject that he began to cast forth his thunderbolts on a trembling world.

I have not got the stenographic report before me of what he said that day, and I have purposely not looked at it, but have preferred to rely entirely on my memory. But it ran somewhat as follows:

He could not understand why the gentlemen on the Left were always attacking the Prussian Landrat. The Prussian Landrat, Conservative as he might be, did at least do his duty, and ought to be left in peace. Besides, the true cancer spot was not the Conservative, but the Liberal, Landrat.

A wave of astonishment swept over the Chamber and burst like foam over the gallery.

We could not believe our ears. When had there ever been a *Liberal* Landrat in any part of Germany? A Liberal Landrat was an absurdity—a contradiction in terms.

Seats banged, desks were hurriedly closed, and a new wave, this time a physical wave, composed of dark-clad human beings, flowed up in front of the balustrade of the Ministerial bench and toward the place from which the great man was speaking.

I looked down on a confused half circle of heated, furious faces, ready for anything, crowded closely together, looking up at Bismarck. The parties of the Right were also on their feet, and were smiling with joy over the *deus ex machina*, which a kindly Providence had suddenly sent down to their assistance.

The Speaker called the House to order and he continued.

He just wished to call their attention to one example of what he meant. The Landrat Baumbach had been unable to restrain himself at the last elections from utilizing his position so as to influence the electors. He had driven from one electoral district to another in the same carriage as the Liberal candidate, the honorable member Herr Lasker, so as to induce the electors to vote for him. He wished to know whether this instance would suffice.

He was answered by a tumult which seemed as if it would never end. The incident which he had cited had occurred in the small state of Sachsen-Meiningen, which Baumbach represented—he was, incidentally, the brother of the poet who wrote the words to that beautiful song "Die Lindenwirtin"—and the iron fist of the Prussian Minister of the Interior had no

authority there. What happened there might be exceedingly unpleasant to the authorities on the Government bench, even if they had not already stamped everything which did not suit their book as being hostile to the Empire.

This cynical attempt to make this harmless episode, which, after all, involved no threat or intention of forcing anyone to go against his convictions, a cloak for the thousand scandalous crimes which occurred daily, and further to turn it into an accursed offense, seemed as if it might excuse any outburst of indignation, however strong that might be. And suddenly from the general murmur of cries and countercries a voice shrilled out the word, "Scandalous," like a whip lash.

There was complete silence. The expression was too sharp.

You should have seen Bismarck at that moment!

His enormous body seemed to increase in stature. He stretched his limbs and his right hand grasped his sword hilt. Then he literally *danced*, aye, danced up to the Speaker's seat, as a boy dances along on a hobbyhorse—past the tribune from which members addressed the House, to the left of the balustrade, toward the man who had insulted him and who remained concealed in the crowd which stood there, calling out: "Scandalous! Who dared to say that? Scandalous! Who dared say that?"

The silence continued and he stood there, his head thrown back, his hand on his sword hilt, ready to strike anyone down who dared to oppose him.

Then the Speaker intervened. He asked the member who had used the expression to come forward. The dignity of the House demanded that he should do so.

The silence still continued.

The Speaker appealed again and yet once again.

Then the crowd parted and a little fat figure said, in a contrite voice:

"I used the expression."

The tension was released. The member, Struve, received a reprimand from the Speaker, and Bismarck returned satisfied to his seat.

Then the guilty member asked permission to speak, and the Speaker of the House said:

"Herr Struve!"

"I have been called to order, Mr. Speaker, for using the word 'Scandalous.' But the Imperial Chancellor has also used the same word with regard to myself. What do you propose to do about it?"

That was a very ticklish question, for the President of the Reichstag had no authority to call the Chancellor to order. And I shall never forget the helpless, pleading look which the highest representative of the people turned sideways to the almighty Bismarck.

He was still on his feet, waiting for the end of the incident, in order to continue his speech.

"The Imperial Chancellor."

"The honorable member—um, um, um—says that I have accused him of being a scandalous person—um, um, um; that is probable—um, um, um—but as the honorable member has had the courage to come forward—um, um, um—I have no objection to stating that in my opinion the honorable member understands what a scandalous person is."

Anyone who had not the privilege of hearing the irony in Bismarck's tone will still be able to realize that, so far from being an apology, it was a fresh insult, but Herr Struve and his friends accepted it, whether they liked it or not, and the session continued.

I no longer remember what else Bismarck said or

what the people in the House answered. I had only one question in my head, namely, how to describe the incident. For, horrible as it may sound, not only Baumbach and Lasker, but also Herr Struve—he was the son of the patriot who distinguished himself in 1848—were all members of the party which owned the paper which I officially represented.

I too had a certain amount of responsibility, for what I wrote must be the official account for the party which would be accepted as such by everyone who belonged to it.

I thought it all out on my way back to the office. No matter how I might color the incident, I had to confess that my employers had not come well out of it. On the contrary, I had to admit that they had cut but a very poor figure. "Oh well," I said, recklessly. "Say nothing about it and let them curse if they want to."

So I sat down at my table, wrote out a fine report, and, instead of describing the incident or even mentioning it, I ended up my account with the words, heavily underlined, "The atmosphere of the House was feverish."

The paper had scarcely been sent off for delivery when Rickert burst in at the door in a state of great excitement and with terrible anxiety in his eyes.

"Has the number gone out?" he asked.

"Certainly," answered Bartsch. "We have just sent it off."

He sank, crushed, into a chair, casting a hopeless look toward me. Then he said:

"Miserable wretch! What did you say to-night?"

"I?" I replied, innocently. I wrote, "The atmosphere of the House was feverish."

"And then? What else?"

"Nothing more," I answered. "Where should I be if I had?"

He jumped up, laid hold of me, and embraced me. Then he exclaimed:

"You're my man. You're the man I've been looking for. Come to see me to-morrow and then I will tell you what I have for you."

When I appeared before him the next day, he unfolded the following scheme to me. He began:

"You showed so much circumspection and reserve yesterday, my dear boy, that I think we can venture to trust you. I have been looking for a long time for some one who can write, who can help us to found a weekly to spread the view of the party in the country. It will have to be confined pretty much to the same style as that of a calendar, and, apart from the political portion which I shall look after myself, it will be a popular paper, containing a scientific article with the appropriate illustrations, a story complete, if possible, in one number, a poem, riddles, and so on. The paper will not cost more than fifty pfennigs a quarter, besides a large number of copies will be distributed gratis. Rudolf Mosse will print it and bear half the cost of production. Will you undertake the post of editor?"

"Of the editor-in-chief?" I asked, absolutely flabbergasted.

"If you insist on the title we can even call you that," he replied, with a smile. "For the paper won't be able to carry more than one. But you will, of course, have to find your own collaborators. I am particularly worried about the story part of the paper, for the art of writing something really popular is almost non-existent among our literary people."

"I am a writer myself, properly speaking," I replied,

"and if you will leave the story to me, that will be my contribution to the success of the undertaking."

"But can you write popular stuff?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Well, I have never tried it," I answered, "but I think that anyone in my position must be ready to learn anything. Otherwise he may just as well try to black patent-leather shoes."

Herr Rickert, who knew the expression, as an old-fashioned Prussian would, smiled indulgently, and after I had received instructions to introduce myself to the leaders of the party, Lasker, Bamberger, Kapp, von Bunsen, and, more particularly, the publisher, Herr Mosse, I was dismissed. But first he opened the door of the next room, took me by the arm and led me to a matronly lady who sat huddled up, with a red nose and washed-out eyes, reading a book behind her sewing table.

That was his wife, the clever, kindly lady who was to regulate my agitated life for nearly two years with gentle suggestions and guiding criticism, and who, although I did not know it, was to take the place of Mathilde as my friend, for she went away shortly afterward. And to her I sometimes owed it that I had the honor of stretching my long legs under a table covered with a damask cloth and adorned with silver, and of finding peace.

I left the house in a dream. Four weeks before, I had been on the edge of a precipice, hopeless, without a job, a failure in my studies as well as in my life, and that day I was the lord of my own paper, which, although it was still in the womb of time, was something which I had to shape for myself out of nothing, in such a form that it would be passed out, filled with my own ideas, like an overflowing cup, for the

people, who were of course athirst for knowledge, to drink.

Nowadays it takes no great courage to be a republican. It is so trival that many are inclined, because they are snobs, or for æsthetic reasons, or because they wish to seem proud and discontented, to yearn for a monarchy again—I am not thinking of those who are monarchists by nature or who have some private ax to grind—but in those days the middle classes considered republicanism as a madness, which even the survivors of 1848 dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders. I had quarreled with Socialism, and the Progressive party maintained that it was as loyal to the throne as any other. Also the name of "Democrat" was in bad repute. It seemed half a joke and also half suspicious, even though its adherents had but recently sworn allegiance to the idea. But one knew that both ideals were not dead, even though they were cloaked by adherence to the monarchy, although my leaders were content with hating Bismarck, and with their enthusiasm for free trade, to assure them of their uprightness of purpose.

There were always some differences between us, but I had no choice. If I was not to go under, I must lay hold of the life line which had been thrown to me, and once the work began, I should be able to do good, even in my position.

The first person I went to see was Herr Mosse.

I had passed his realm in the Jerusalemerstrasse daily with timid despondency, for there seemed to be but little hope that I should ever be able to gain a footing there. But now I walked in boldly and cheerfully up the proud staircase, to report myself directly to the almighty person who controlled the whole business. He had heard of me already, and received

me with an encouraging pressure of the hand—not in the least like my commanding officer. As a matter of fact, that was not his position, and it always seemed to me to be necessary to insist on that, both on this occasion and on every other when I entered the Lion's den with some complaint or request. I could use more freedom than the other slaves of the pen ventured to do, for, for the princely salary of one hundred and twenty marks a month and two damp rooms at the back to live in, I soon was writing the whole paper myself from beginning to end, from the leading article down to the riddles, which I, when all the rest was ready, dictated, together with my poem, straight to the compositor. I was consequently more or less justified in regarding myself as indispensable.

I also visited Lasker and Bamberger, two definitely Jewish brains of the highest order, the former a strong patriot, full of eagerness to save his country, the latter a man of the world, keen and mildly sarcastic. Bunsen, a grand seigneur, half English in character, regarded me as a superior messenger boy, but was fond of imparting instructions, while Kapp, a giant with gray hair that stood up like a brush, disposed of me, as a rule, in the passage.

A generation later, when I read the pamphlet of his son against Bethmann-Hollweg, in which he spoke of the "Sink of Democracy," I could not help thinking of the "sink" from which he had himself arisen, for his father had once been obliged to take refuge in America, owing to the persecution which he had endured as a Democrat. What he did later on, has it not been written in the history of Germany's sorrows?

While the preparations for the new paper were in progress (to carry out the usual laws of imitation it

was to be called *Das Deutsche Reichsblatt* and was to bear the official German eagle proudly on its forehead) and while I was busily engaged in running round from one part of the printing establishment to another, and in seeing politicians, I still continued my activities for the party's news agency, and so long as the parliaments were in session, there was no end to the zeal with which I wrote.

The party at the time had very far-reaching plans. Not content with the daily paper which they had founded in Berlin—it was called *The Tribune*, and had risen from a miserable little sheet to be an important political organ—the party leaders intended to establish a number of papers appearing daily in several medium-sized German towns which were to compete with the existing Conservative or Progressive papers. One of these was to be founded at Landsberg an der Warthe. Every editorial office is inhabited by a number of occasional correspondents who sit about there, even if they are not busy, who are looking for work to do, or who want to while away the time. Consequently, there was as much coming and going in the office of the *Liberale Korrespondenz* as there is in a pigeon loft.

Among the habitués of the office there was a Herr Pederzani-Weber, whom I got to know. A fine-looking man, who aroused my special interest because he had been a monk in an Austrian monastery and had run away from it. The leaders of the party had chosen him to establish and make a success of the *Neue Landsberger Zeitung*—I think, at least, that was the name.

Before he left for his new sphere of operations he took me aside one day and asked me if I would do him a personal favor by supplying the paper with a service

of telegrams. In addition to the actual cost of the telegram he promised me as much as M. 1.50 per message. I agreed eagerly, for in those days one could get a midday meal of five courses for M. 1.50.

He was particularly anxious, he said, to get something special for the first number, which would appear on the Monday morning—that is to say, at a time when the other papers did not come out. In order to strike a severe blow at the competing papers it was necessary that this first number should contain some very important, or, if possible, sensational news, and for this he relied on me, for I was remaining at the very heart of events.

I assured him that I would do everything I could think of to give him what he wanted, and he went away satisfied. But during the whole of the week I daily received a letter with the postmark "Landsberg an der Warthe," in which Herr Pederzani-Weber besought me on no account to miss the sensational news which was absolutely essential for the success of his paper.

And so that Sunday in March arrived in which I had to carry out what I had undertaken.

After dinner I called for my friend Otto Neumann to take him for a walk down Unter den Linden, for I thought that the heart of the capital would be the best place to find out what was secretly going on in the great world.

A beautiful sunlit gray mist lay over the whole world. The sparrows near the cab stands were chirruping with delight, and if the human beings walking up and down did not imitate their example, everyone was looking extremely happy.

That was all very fine and large, but the important world-shaking news for which people in Landsberg an

der Warthe were impatiently waiting had not given the faintest sign of itself.

We went into the Café Bauer and looked over the London and Paris papers while we drank a cup of coffee, for it was always possible that the Berlin editors had overlooked something which might be important to Landsberg an der Warthe, but the whole field seemed to have been thoroughly covered, and even the sporting information had already been used.

We returned to the street, discouraged, to find that the people who were taking a walk were crowding on one another's heels. We paid no attention to the pretty girls, but in revenge we looked everyone who seemed to be serious squarely in the eyes, particularly those who seemed to be in a hurry, for if anyone had any important news to give, it would be there that we should have to look for it. But nothing happened. Even the crowd in front of the Russian Embassy, where the police were keeping the way clear for carriages which went in and out, seemed as if it could mean nothing more important than that a reception was being held or that some festival was being celebrated.

It was just a March Sunday like any other, and the fact that it was so ordinary extinguished my last hope.

But when we turned back from the Brandenburger Tor, the crowd to the right and left of the entrance to the Russian Embassy had increased considerably. A mounted policeman had been stationed in front of it, and wherever one saw the mounted police one could be sure that there was something up.

We asked the people in front of us, but they knew nothing, either. All that they could say was that the people who had driven into the Embassy had seemed very much excited.

Then while we were still waiting, a cry reached us

from far off, from a very long way off, which made us sit up. A cry to which our ears have become accustomed all too well since the war began, for through it our wild imaginations have been fed for four long years. It was the cry of: "Extra! Extra Special!"

And at the same time the police suddenly relaxed their official reticence and murmured something about the Tsar and "murder."

We looked at each other and pinched each other's arms. Could it be true? It seemed impossible.

In the meantime the cry was rising louder and louder and began to overwhelm us like the waves of a great orchestra.

White sheets shone like banners over the crowd beyond us, and at last they broke through the chain of police and had reached us.

"The Tsar Alexander II has fallen a victim to an execrable attempt to assassinate him. A bomb . . . etc."

There it was and not to be disbelieved even by any incredulous person. We almost embraced each other, but it was just as well that we maintained our self-control, otherwise we might have been cast into chains as members of the conspiracy.

And while we hurried off to the nearest telegraph office with the sheet, which was still wet, in our hands, I could not help having the vague sensation that a kindly Providence had caused this terrible event to happen especially for my benefit.

At the telegraph office we mustered our resources and discovered that I should have to condense my message unless we wanted to go to bed hungry. An argument arose over the word "execrable" and other words of a similar character. Neumann thought that it was lacking in feeling to suppress such epithets, while I maintained that they could be

filled in *ad libitum* by the editor, especially as I had to pay for them at the rate of five pfennigs per word.

To such an extent had journalism brutalized me.

But when I entered the office of the *Liberale Korrespondenz* the next morning, my friend and patron, Herr Bartsch, came forward to meet me in no good humor.

"Do you know," he said, "that you spoiled my whole night's rest?"

"How so, then?"

"A telegraph messenger brought me out of bed at three in the morning because Pederzani wanted to know whether it were really true that the Tsar had been assassinated or whether you had invented the story. He did not dare to publish it until I had confirmed it."

Well! What could I do about it? Providence had looked after me in vain, and the first number of the *Neue Landsberger Zeitung* had appeared without my telegram.

This was the beginning and end of my attempt to carry out a journalistic news service.

In the meantime the preparations for my own first number had taken their course.

There is a department in every large paper which is called the general department and in which the occasional and accidental news which comes along is worked up for the press, and so it was in the house of Mosse.

While I never ventured into the compositors' room of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, which was on the story below, I ruled here as master and as friend. I soon knew each compositor by name and had made friends with him, so that he never minded working after hours, and though it might be three or four in the

morning, I always got a friendly greeting from him when he left.

It is scarcely possible to describe the importance which attached to me at that time, even if I attempt to describe the care which I took to look after the health of the men employed there. They had to work in front of hot gas flames which provided an atmosphere like that of a Roman bath, while the open windows admitted an icy blast which spread itself all around. Nor even if I tell you that I did the most menial work myself, that when it came to "breaking up," I took the "frame" myself and would not be parted from it, or that I was ready to go up in the air over any mistake which I found. I would really have preferred to set up the whole paper myself so that no strange hand should have anything to do with it.

At first I had to keep very close touch with my chief so far as the political portion was concerned. He gave me the leading article himself, while I wrote the political review of the week under his supervision and in accordance with his instructions, at least so long as he thought that his control was necessary.

But I had the complete control over the nonpolitical portion of the paper from the first. There I could spread myself as much as I liked, and I did so so thoroughly that when we came to measure up the space available, I had supplied three times as much as the paper could take.

But even a first number has to appear.

And one morning I held the first number in my trembling hands—like all other firstborn, it was dripping wet. The first sheets from the press! It seemed to me like a banner of victory.

My eyes glanced hastily to the last line. Yes! there

it stood — actually — Editor responsible, Hermann Sudermann!

This was the first time in my life that I had seen my name in print. In print! like those of Friedrich von Schiller and Friedrich Spielhagen.

I took the first copy to my friend Mathilde, the second to Frau Rickert, and both the women were satisfied with it.

And when I had taken the third, which was destined for my parents, off to the post office, I wandered about the Tiergarten like a madman and repeated continually to myself:

"You have *not* gone to the dogs. You need not be a private tutor again. You are going to succeed. You are going to top the clouds. Now there can be no going back, but only a going forward and a rise in life."

My way lay clear before me.

I was to be a politician and journalist until I had learned the Art of Writing to its limits. But then I was going to go back to writing, to writing novels or even *plays*. But I was not going back as an outsider, or as a bungler, a person to whom one naturally shut one's doors or over whose scribble one simply shrugged one's shoulders and returned it immediately, but as some one who already counted and whom one met as some one worthy of one's spear.

At intervals I sat down on a seat and took the first number out of my pocket to immerse myself in it afresh. And ever and again my eye was attracted to that name, which, released from my personality, seemed to have a mysterious separate existence, the name which was responsible for the whole paper.

Responsible, too, for the rest of my life.

THE END

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